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ABSTRACT

Profiled in this report are exemplary schools selected for national recognition through the Elementary School Recognition Program. Section 1 describes the national recognition program and the criteria and processes used in selecting schools. Section 2 presents basic background information about the schools: their community settings, characteristics of their students, the schools' organizational characteristics, and school achievement indicators. Section 3 discusses seven broad themes that appear essential to school excellence: (1) teaching which develops student competence and character; (2) setting of high expectations, monitoring of standards, and rewarding of results; (3) school leadership; (4) creation of professional work environments; (5) resources that facilitate teaching and learning processes; (6) school-community relations; and (7) overcoming of obstacles. Themes are illustrated by examples of policies and practices in the schools. Section 4 summarizes major aspects of each theme, and provides advice to State and local policymakers. The report is not a recipe book for school reform, but rather aims to: (1) draw public attention to broad themes of success associated with excellence at elementary schools; (2) stimulate thinking about such excellence; and (3) entice readers to make inquiries about specific polici and practices of the 212 outstanding schools. Appendices list names and locations of schools, review panelists, and site visitors. (RH)

Places Where Children Succeed

A Profile of Outstanding Public Elementary Schools

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
Programs for the Improvement of Practice

PLACES WHERE CHILDREN SUCCEED:

A PROFILE OF OUTSTANDING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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FOREWORD

Americans expect their elementary schools to perform a crucial task: provide their children with a foundation of knowledge and skills to carry them through further education and the rest of their lives. It is in elementary school where our children should learn to read and write, where they should first be told about our history and our common culture, and where they should be taught good habits of study and character. To no single institution except the family do we give so much influence over our children's lives. But, until a short time ago, our national movement for educational excellence had not yet paid sustained attention to elementary schools.

In recognition of the importance of elementary education, 2 years ago I declared the 1985-86 school year "The Year of the Elementary School." At the same time, I announced that the Department of Education would launch two major efforts to underscore our commitment to elementary schools and their students. First, I organized the Elementary Education Study Group, comprising 21 distinguished Americans, to assist me in evaluating the status of elementary education in this country. My goal was to extend understanding of elementary education beyond the schoolhouse door. I wanted to give parents, teachers, administrators, legislators, and business leaders an idea of what we should -- all together -- strive for in our Nation's elementary schools. Last fall, I released a report of my findings from this study called First Lessons.

Also in 1985, I extended the Department's school recognition program -- which had in its first 3 years done much to highlight excellence in American secondary education -- to include elementary schools. Places Where Children Succeed is a report on the first year of our Elementary School Recognition Program and on the 212 public elementary schools whose achievements it has documented. These exemplary schools are proof that everywhere in the country, under almost any circumstances, high standards of academic expectation and performance are possible. This report pays tribute to the skill and dedication of the administrators, teachers, and parents who have made these schools what they are. And I trust it will be, as well, a guide and an inspiration to others who seek to replicate their success.

William J. Bennett, Secretary
United States Department of
Education

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Contents

Introduction

> Excellence is found in the most affluent suburbs and in the midst of oppressive poverty. While adopting measures to lift the general level of America's elementary schools and paying special attention to those who need help the most, we should keep in mind that excellence can be achieved anywhere. (Bennett, 1986, p. 65)

In September of 1986, as children all over America returned to school, Secretary of Education William J. Bennett issued a report on the Nation's public elementary schools. Prepared with the assistance of a 21-member task force of distinguished Americans, the report entitled First Lessons: A Report on Elementary Education in America (Bennett, 1986) set forth the Secretary's view on the state of elementary education. The report offered State and local policymakers specific recommendations on curriculum, the improvement of the teaching profession, and school policies. The central message of the report was the need to strengthen these critical institutions and, particularly, to enhance their academic rigor and attention to the teaching of traditional values.

In the same month in which the report was issued, board members, administrators, and teachers from 212 public elementary schools across the Nation convened in Washington, D.C., for a ceremony to celebrate the success of their schools. These exemplary schools were selected for national recognition through the Elementary School Recognition Program, initiated by Secretary Bennett a year earlier. The schools being honored represented the great diversity in American public education, but the educators and citizens associated with them shared a common commitment to quality.

The schools and educators were honored by the Federal Government for their ability to establish and maintain exemplary programs, policies, and practices and were recognized as models for all who wish to see the Nation's elementary schools improve. The staffs of these schools have successfully addressed many of the issues raised in the Secretary's report, often in spite of difficult odds. Their experiences should inspire those who seek reform. Their programs, policies, and practices offer concrete options to other educators.

This is a report on those schools. It does not contain detailed recipes for improvement or reform. Instead, its content is intended to draw public attention to the broad themes of success associated with excellence at the elementary school level. Its purpose is to stimulate thinking about the dimensions of excellence in elementary schools and entice readers to make their own inquiries about specific policies and practices in the 212 outstanding schools selected for national recognition.

This report is organized into four major sections. The first section describes the national recognition program and the criteria and processes that led to the selection of the schools. The second section presents basic background information about the schools: their community settings, the characteristics of their students, the schools' organizational characteristics, and school achievement indicators. The third section is the heart of the report. Based on careful coding and analysis of site visit reports and detailed and lengthy nomination forms, the characteristics of the schools are examined. Seven broad themes that seem to characterize the essentials of these schools are discussed. These themes are illustrated by examples of policies and practices in the schools, as described in the words of people on site. The fourth and final section summarizes the major aspects of each theme and provides some messages for State and local policymakers.

This brief report cannot hope to do justice to the qualities that have made these schools so successful or to adequately portray the vitality and commitment of their staffs, board members, citizens, and parents who have supported their efforts. If the reader finds in this report some sources of hope and excitement, and is thus motivated to pursue further information about these models of excellence, then its purpose will have been fulfilled.

Description of the Program

While there is enormous pressure for reform of America's public schools, it is also true that vast numbers of schools that are characterized by outstanding effort and achievement already exist. While State leaders discuss the need to raise standards, to reform teacher education, and to create new incentives for school improvement in communities across the Nation, parents, teachers, administrators, students, and civic leaders are working together to create and maintain unusually successful schools. Secretary Bennett launched the Elementary School Recognition Program to highlight such schools. The 212 schools selected for national recognition during the spring of 1986 can serve as models and as sources of inspiration for those communities around the Nation that are striving to improve their schools.[1]

In October 1985, Secretary Bennett proclaimed 1985-86 the "Year of the Elementary School," and, as part of that observance, announced the Elementary School Recognition Program. The program was modeled after its successful predecessor, the Secondary School Recognition Program that has honored 571 secondary schools during its 3-year history. The new program's goal was to focus national attention on schools that are doing an exceptional job with all of their students in developing a solid foundation of basic skills and knowledge of subject matter and fostering the development of character, values, and ethical judgment. During the 1985-86 school year, Department of Education staff members started the process that led to identifying 212 such public elementary schools.

The inital step was to invite the chief State school officers from the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Overseas Dependents' Schools to nominate, with their governors' endorsements, elementary schools deemed worthy of recognition. Each State was able to nominate as many schools as it has U.S. representatives and senators. In response to the invitation, 49 States, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Overseas Dependents' Schools nominated 525 schools. To be eligible for nomination, schools had to meet three "threshold" criteria:

1. They had to be elementary schools serving at least three grade levels between kindergarten and eighth grade.

2. They had to have their own administrators.

3. During each of the past 3 years, 75 percent or more of the students must have achieved at or above grade level in mathematics and reading.

or

Over the past 3 years, the number of students in the school who achieved at or above grade level in mathematics and reading must have increased by an average of 5 percent annually, and in the last year, 50 percent or more of the students must have achieved at or above grade level in both areas.

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[1] See appendix A for a list of the 212 schools.

The rationale for this latter criterion was to include and acknowledge schools whose staffs had recently overcome obstacles to achievement and were working hard to improve. Furthermore, in order to ensure full participation by other unusually successful schools, chief State school officers were encouraged to nominate schools that did not strictly meet the latter criterion but had compelling evidence of school quality and effectiveness that could be documented. In essence, during the process of selecting schools at the State level, each chief State school officer was encouraged to establish a procedure best suited for his or her State.

Cooperation with the chief State school officers has been a critical part of the national recognition programs. They are responsible for conducting recognition programs in their own States in order to nominate schools for national recognition. The quality of the applicant pool depends upon their decisions. The national recognition program staff members work closely with a liaison person from each State to ensure that the goals of the program are communicated accurately to local school officials.

The 525 elementary schools nominated by the chief State school officers during the 1985-86 school year were required to submit a nomination form to the U.S. Department of Education by February 14, 1986. The form asked local educators to document their performance on the following eight indicators: quality of school organization; quality of building leadership; quality of instructional program and curriculum, including character development; quality of instruction; quality of school climate; quality of school-community relations; quality of efforts to make improvements and maintain high quality programs; and quality of student outcomes. No specific standards were set for the indicators, as it was assumed that there is no single formula for school success and that a variety of approaches to quality is possible. The overall quality of each school was judged on how well its programs were tailored to local circumstances and its success in meeting local needs. Schools were encouraged to involve broad staff and community participation in completing the nomination form. According to many school staffs, just going through this process proved to be a valuable experience. As one principal noted:

> The whole school program has been uplifted and revitalized ...
> It was one of the best things that happened to us ...
> What everyone discovered in the process was that this is a good school.

The next step in the review process was the convening of a national panel in Washington, D.C., to consider the 509 nominated schools that met the eligibility criteria. This 38-member review panel included parents, business and community leaders, education writers, university faculty, State policy-makers, local practitioners, and other leading citizens concerned about the quality of education.[2] They reviewed the nomination forms and recommended 257 schools for site visits.

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[2] See appendix B for a list of the panelists.

The 257 schools were scattered across 47 States and the District of Columbia and included a mix of urban, suburban, and rural schools. They ranged in size from schools with more than 1,200 students to those serving fewer than 100. The schools were also diverse in their organizational patterns with a wide range of grade-level and student grouping plans. The communities in which these elementary schools were located also reflected the full diversity of the American economic and ethnic experience.

Thirty-five people spent March, April, and May 1986 visiting the 257 recommended schools to clarify and amplify the information on the application forms. These site visitors[3] were chosen because they were knowledgable about school improvement efforts and had experience in elementary education, qualitative research, or both. Among the site visitors were elementary school principals who had been recognized in the National Distinguished Principal's Program sponsored by the National Association of Elementary School Principals. In addition to practicing and retired principals, the site visitors included teachers, university faculty, officials of State education agencies, and consultants.

Each site visit lasted 2 days and included meetings with parents, teachers, students, building support personnel, and district administrators. Time was provided also for classroom and informal observations to assess the ethos of the school. Detailed written reports of 15 to 25 pages were submitted on each of the schools visited. The site visitors were generally enthusiastic about the schools they visited, as the following comments suggest:

> I have not met any group of people [principals] that had more enthusiasm and ideas than they had.

> I saw teachers who really believed they could make a difference in the schools. They knew they were important and their principals had enabled them to make the kinds of changes in the school that they felt were important.

> These are really healthy organizations, the kind that you read about in In Search of Excellence, with lots of rewards for people, lots of good feelings about identification with the organization, and lots of opportunities for messing around and solving problems on an ad hoc basis.

After the site visits, the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights reviewed current Office of Civil Rights files to determine whether the schools complied with Federal civil rights standards. Where the Assistant Secretary held the opinion that there was clear evidence of violations, schools were removed from further consideration.

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[3] See appendix C for a list of the site visitors.

In mid-June 1986, the site visitors and review panel members reconvened in Washington, D.C., to discuss each school that had been visited. The review panel read the site visit reports, reread the nomination forms, queried the site visitors, and then recommended the schools to be recognized. Their final decisions rested on the extent to which the schools met the basic criteria and provided evidence of high performance across the quality indicators, and on whether the schools could serve as models for others. On June 27, 1986, Secretary Bennett announced the names of the 212 recognized schools. Representatives from each school convened in Washington, D.C., in September for a special ceremony where President Reagan made the formal recognition.

In addition to the well deserved tributes which the dedicated school staffs received and the good feelings which the ceremonies generated, a by-product of the process was a wealth of information about the characteristics of successful schools and the factors that contributed to their success. The challenge now is to analyze, share, and use that information to generate success in other schools. As a first step in that direction, this report offers concrete examples of the programs and practices that made these schools so successful and worthy of emulation.

Information About the Schools

Success comes packaged in many different ways. This section highlights the diversity of the schools by comparing their demographic and organizational features and their results with national trends.[1] However, neither demographics nor organizational features best explain success in these schools; rather, the way people in these communities work together produces their success.

Demographics

Three demographic characteristics are featured in this section: ethnicity, locality, and socioeconomic status. Though the schools cannot control these characteristics, they are often used to explain lack of success. The interesting fact is that many of these schools have demographic characteristics typically associated with high levels of failure, but they succeed despite the difficult environmental conditions.

The first finding is that the populations in these schools are as diverse as the communities across this Nation. For example, minority students represent approximately one-quarter of the Nation's school enrollment, and the same is true of the students from this sample (see figure 1). Almost one-fifth of the recognized schools have a majority of minority students. While eight of them have little or no minority enrollment, there are an equal number that are all minority. In addition, there are 24 recognized schools with a majority of black students and 7 with a majority of Hispanic students. One in seven of these schools has encountered a significant influx of recent immigrants.

The schools are in urban, suburban, and rural settings (see figure 2). The proportion of schools in urban areas is similar to national figures (23 percent vs. 30 percent). There is some deviation from the national picture with respect to the suburban and rural settings. Only 11 percent of the recognized schools are from rural communities, although the national figure is close to 38 percent. Nearly two-thirds of the schools are located in suburban sites, while only one-third of the Nation's schools are in suburbs. In making these comparisons, caution is necessary, however, because the definitions of the three categories are quite ambiguous. The differences noted between the recognized schools and the national population may be attributed to different definitions of the categories. For instance, no specific definition of "urban, suburban, and rural" is provided to the schools participating in the recognition program. Schools use their own

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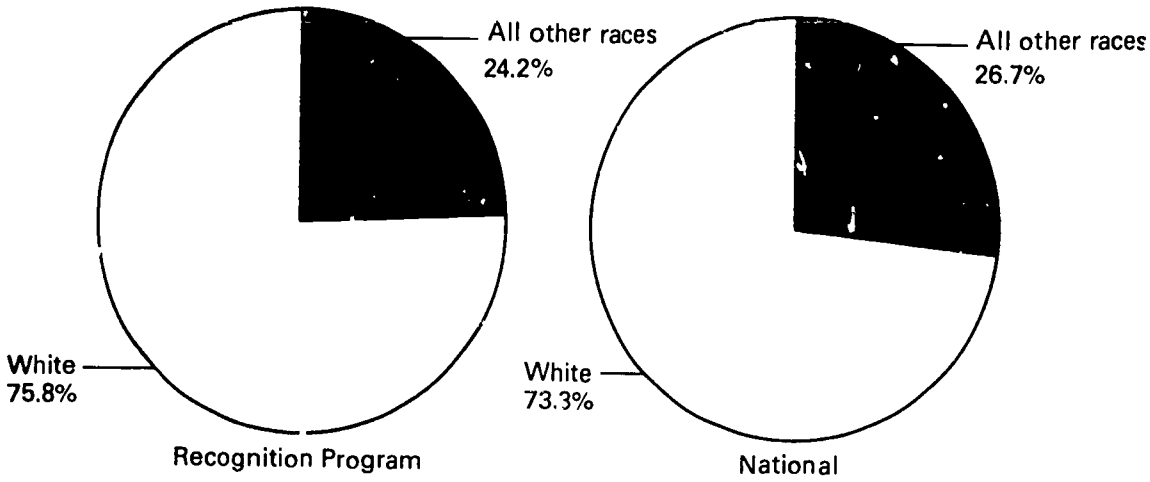
[1] In five of the nine figures presented in this section, data from the recognized schools are compared with national data. A note of caution must precede any interpretation of these comparisons. The definitions of categories may not always be comparable in the two groups. Furthermore, the somewhat arbitrary outpoints displayed in the figures are a function of what was available from national sources.

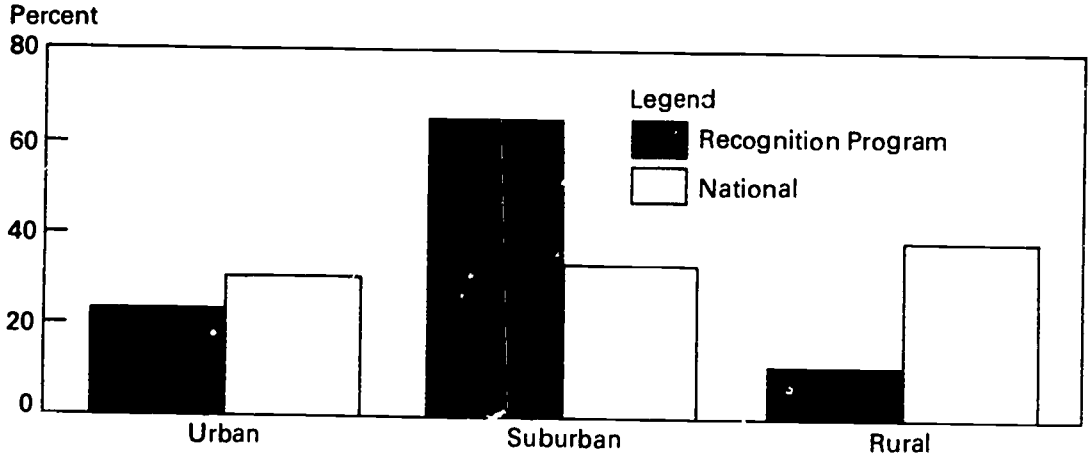
Demographics

Figure 1: Student Ethnicity



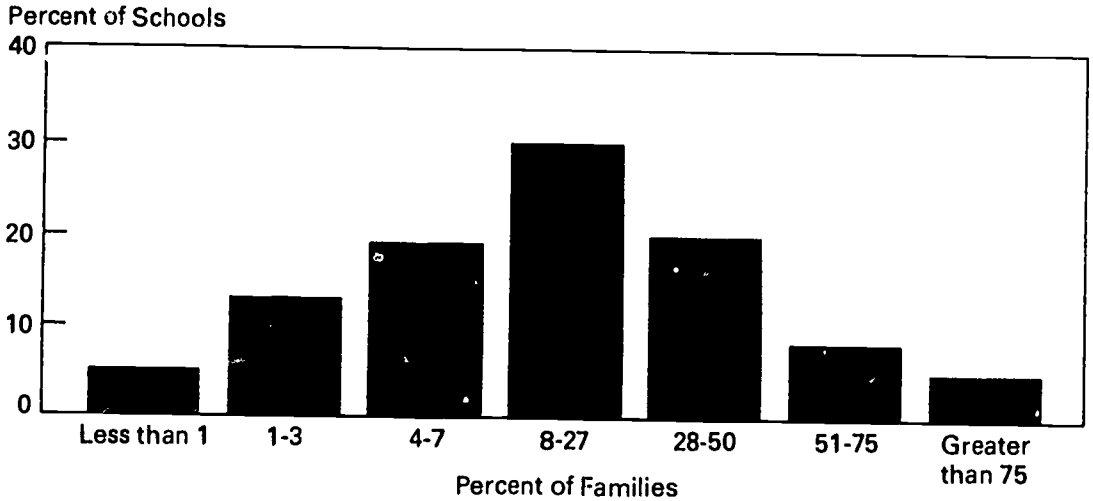
SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, *Condition of Education*, 1985, p. 26.

Figure 2: Locality



SOURCE: Market Data Retrieval. *1986 Educational Mailing Lists and Marketing Guide*. Shelton, CT.

Figure 3: Percent of Families Eligible for Free Lunch



SOURCE: Market Data Retrieval. *1986 Educational Mailing Lists and Marketing Guide*. Shelton, CT.

criteria, and their self-designations are reflected in the recogniton school data. In contrast, the definition used in the national sample is a complicated, U.S. Census Bureau definition involving Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas.

The measure of socioeconomic status used for comparison is the percent of families eligible for free lunch programs.[2] The Recognition Program schools represent the full spectrum of schools from wealthy communities with almost no families eligible for free lunches to schools with almost all families eligible (see figure 3). In fact, one out of eight of the schools has a majority of its families eligible for free lunches. These data indicate that excellence is found in schools serving families of widely varying economic means.

Organizational Characteristics

The five organizational and structural characteristics discussed in this section include size, number of elementary schools in the district, grade span, use of homogeneous or heterogeneous[3] groupings in classes, and principal's years of service. What is common for all of these indicators is the wide variation across the exemplary schools. The single most important message to be drawn from this variation is that no single organizational condition is related to school success.

The first variable is the size of student enrollment (see figure 4). The average enrollment of these elementary schools is just over 500 students.[4] This figure is higher than the national average of 355. There is a great deal of variation in size that is masked by the summary statistics; the schools range in size from a one-room school with only 40 students to a large school that educates 1,229 students. The rest are distributed within this range and resemble the size distribution of American elementary schools. In other words, exemplary schools are found across the full range of student enrollments.

The number of elementary schools in the districts which these schools represent also varies (see figure 5). Ten percent of the recognized schools come from districts where they are the only elementary school in

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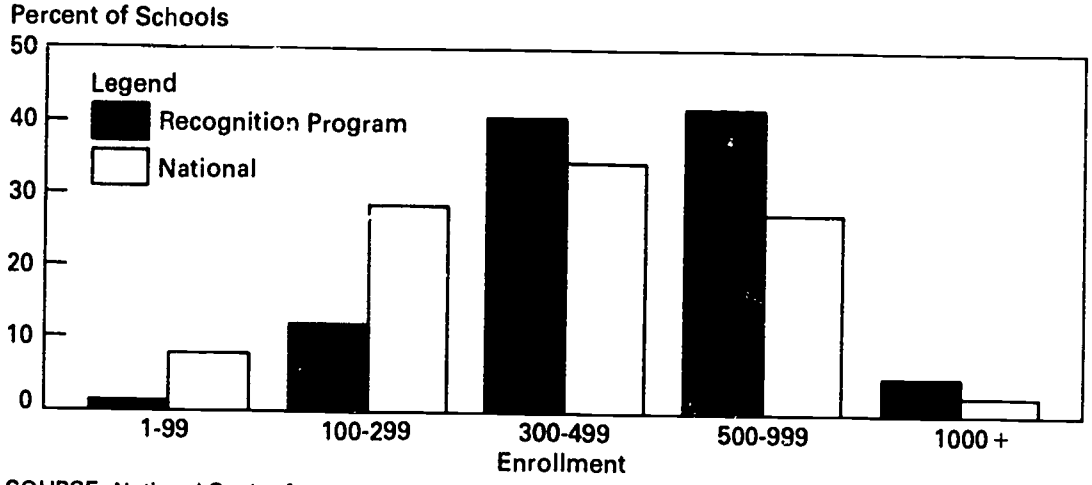
[2] No comparable national data could be found. While there are several different family wealth indicators available, none are comparable to the data collected on the nomination form.

[3] A homogeneous grouping is one in which students of similar abilities are placed together for instruction; a heterogeneous grouping is one where students of differing abilities are taught in the same classroom.

[4] These figures exclude the nine middle schools.

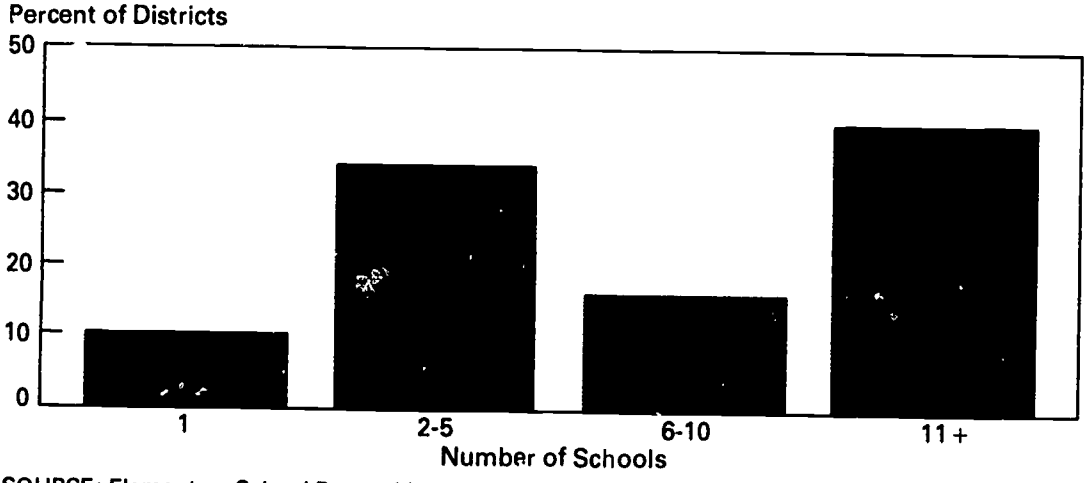
Organizational Characteristics

Figure 4: Student Enrollment



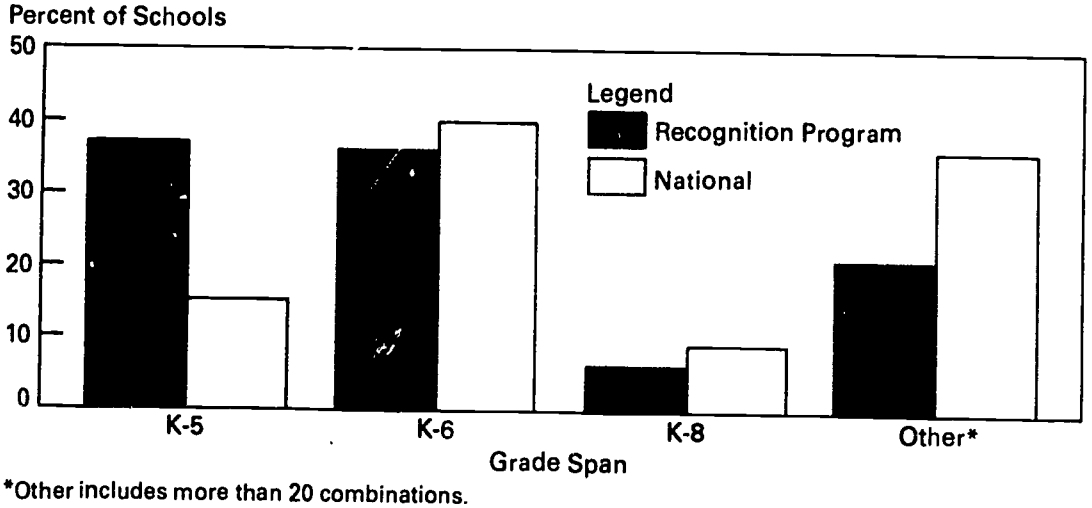
SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, *Historical Report*, September 1985, p. 6.

Figure 5: Number of Elementary Schools in the District



SOURCE: Elementary School Recognition Program, nomination forms.

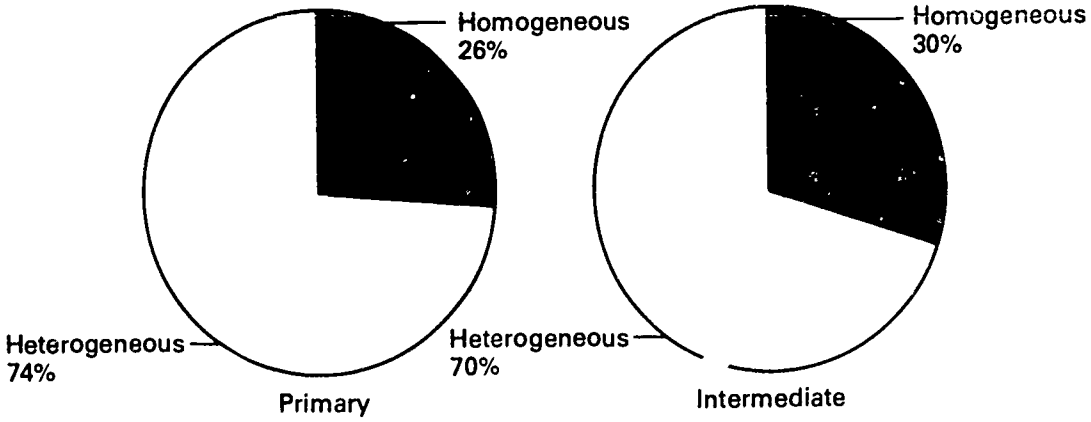
Figure 6: Grade Span



*Other includes more than 20 combinations.
SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, *Historical Report*, September 1985, p. 5.

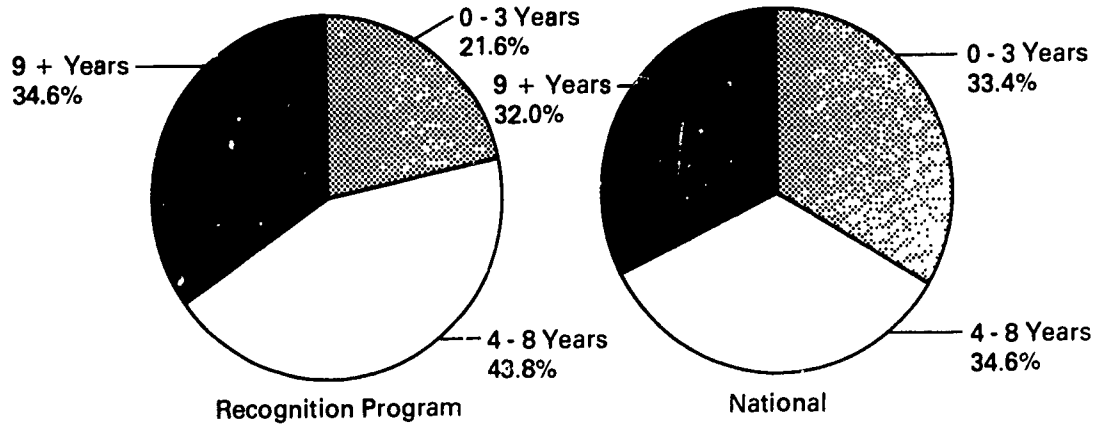
Organizational Characteristics (Continued)

Figure 7: Predominant Grouping Pattern for Instruction



SOURCE: Elementary School Recognition Program, nomination forms.

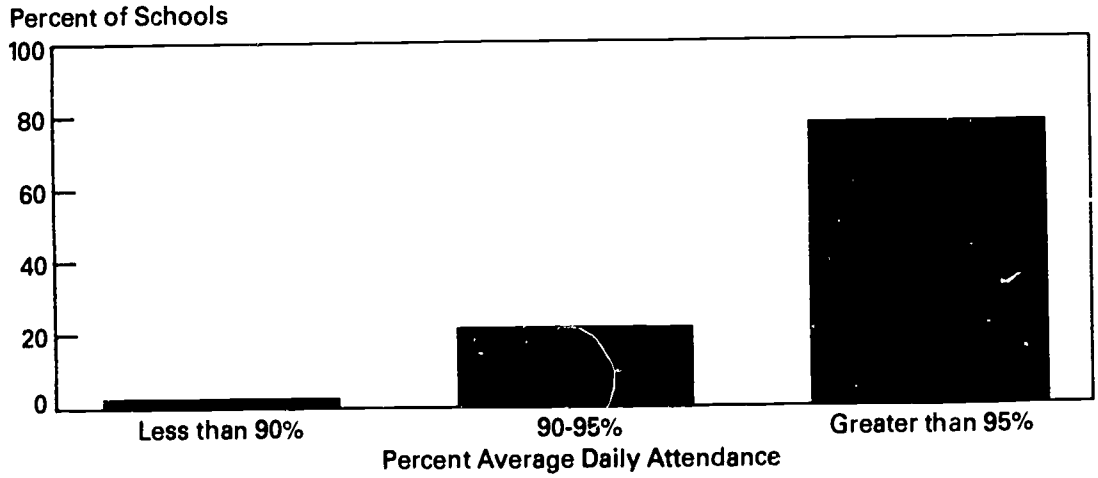
Figure 8: Principal's Tenure



SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, *Indicators of Education Status and Trends*, January 1985, p. 24.

Results

Figure 9: Attendance



SOURCE: Elementary School Recognition Program, nomination forms.

the district. Thirty-four percent of the districts represented in the Recognition Program have two to five elementary schools. However, while 40 percent of the districts have more than 10 elementary schools, 25 percent of them have 20 or more elementary schools and 10 percent have more than 50 elementary schools. Excellence occurs in both small and large school districts.

The way students are organized for instruction in these schools also differs. One indication of organizational diversity is the grade-level configuration in the schools. Similar to national trends, the majority of the schools have a traditional K-5 or K-6 grade span (see figure 6). However, there are at least 20 other combinations. There is also variation in how students are grouped for instruction within the classrooms. While the dominant grouping mode is heterogeneous for both the primary and intermediate grades, over a quarter of the schools have homogeneous ability grouping as their dominant organizational form (see figure 7).

The final indicator is the length of time principals have been in their current positions. Over one-fifth of the schools are led by principals who have been in their current positions for fewer than 3 years (see figure 8). As with the other data, there is wide variation in the number of years principals have been employed in their present positions. The full range is from less than 1 year to 24 years. Success is possible for schools with new principals as well as for schools with leaders who have been in their current positions for a long period of time.

Results

Achievement test scores are the most obvious and scrutinized measures of a school's success. As part of the application process, each school was asked to a submit a summary of standardized achievement test results in reading and math for the 3 most recent years. There were obstacles to comparing those results, however, since schools used different tests, applied different standards, and tested different populations of students. Nevertheless, it is useful to describe some overall trends.

Schools applying for recognition had to have achieved one of two outcomes:

- During each of the past 3 years, 75 percent or more of the students must have achieved at or above grade level in mathematics and reading (Sustained High Performance).

or

- Over the past 3 years, the number of students in the school who achieved at or above grade level in mathematics and reading must have increased by an average of 5 percent annually, and in the last year 50 percent or more of the students must have reached that goal (Recent Improvement).[4]

The mean scores for the schools meeting one or the other of the above criteria are presented in table 1. Between 85 and 90 percent of the students are at or above grade leve in mathematics and reading in those schools with sustained high performance. The improving schools have advanced, with average improvements of 16 percent in mathematics and 17 percent in reading over the 3-year period.

TABLE 1: Average Percent Of Students At Recognized Schools Performing At Or Above Grade Level On Standardized Tests

Year	Sustained High Performance (176 schools)		Recent Improvement (23 schools)	
	Math	Reading	Math	Reading
1982-83	87	86	59	53
1983-84	89	87	68	62
1984-85	89	88	75	70

What lies behind the averages of these improving schools are some remarkable stories:

> Crittenden County Elementary School in Marion, Kentucky, is in a rural setting with a high rate of unemployment and a school system financially ranked in the lower 25 percent in the State. The school was recently formed to consolidate three smaller schools. Within that context, staff members have managed to raise the proportion of students scoring at or above grade level from 55 percent to 77 percent over the course of the last 3 years.

[4] As noted earlier, in specific instances when schools did not meet either of the above criteria but had compelling, documented evidence of school quality and effectiveness, they were nominated by their chief State school officers. Subsequently, 13 schools received recognition under this special provision.

Gibbs Elementary School is located in a challenging urban setting in Canton, Ohio. Despite a 35 percent transiency rate, 80 percent of the students coming from single-parent homes, the school's being located in a high crime neighborhood, and the community's having to deal with a 70-year-old building, staff members have worked to more than double the proportion of students performing at or above grade level in mathematics (from 29 to 64 percent) and have nearly doubled the figures in reading (from 32 to 57 percent) over the past 3 years.

Another useful clue to school performance is attendance. The average daily attendance in the recognized schools is just over 95 percent. Almost none of the schools reported attendance above 97.5 percent, and only a few had attendance below 92.5 percent (see figure 9). These attendance figures reflect what is documented later in this report--that these schools are interesting places to learn and students show their excitement for learning by being active and persistent participants.

The awards that have been presented to students, teachers, and programs in the recognized schools also indicate their success. From spelling bee finalists to teachers of the year to knowledge bowl champs, the accomplishments of the schools have been noticed. Table 2 provides a summary of awards. The students, teachers, or programs at over half of the recognized schools had received State-level awards, and teachers or programs of over a quarter of the schools had received national awards.

TABLE 2: Precent Of Reported State And National Awards For Students, Teachers, Or Programs At Recognized Schools

Level of Award	Students	Teachers	Programs
State	55	58	59
National	17	29	28

Two simple but powerful conclusions can be drawn from a review of the data about these 212 schools. First, their wide variation of demographic and organizational characteristics reflects the diversity of elementary schools found in America. That finding suggests that educational excellence is not limited to a narrow range of communities or organizational settings, but is within the reach of any school community willing to work for it. Second, these schools are successful in many ways. Not only do the staffs at these schools excel in the basics, they also create environments that are enjoyable for students and enable special talents to flourish.

Themes of Success

Although excellence in elementary education takes many forms, it is characterized by some important commonalities. Seven themes emerged from the program data as common elements within the 212 recognized schools. These themes include:

- Teaching: Developing Competence and Character;
- Setting High Expectations, Monitoring Standards, and Rewarding Results;
- School Leadership;
- Creating Professional Work Environments;
- Resources that Facilitate the Teaching/Learning Process;
- School-Community Relations; and
- Overcoming Obstacles.

These seven themes of excellence are generally expressed in the current literature on education in the United States. Secretary of Education William J. Bennett's view of what should be happening in America's elementary schools, as reported in First Lessons: A Report on Elementary Education in America (Bennett, 1986), is broadly reflected in these seven themes of excellence. These themes also overlap with those noted for exemplary secondary schools from the recent report The Search for Successful Secondary Schools: The First Three Years of the Secondary School Recognition Program (Corcoran & Wilson, 1986). The element that seems common at both the elementary and the secondary levels is the emphasis on excellence that helps generate vitality and commitment among administrators, teachers, and students and puts these nationally recognized schools at the forefront of public education.

The themes of excellence are illustrated by examples from the recognized schools that are described in the words of staffs or visitors to these schools. Not only do these examples call attention to successful programs, policies, and practices, but they are also cited to heighten the usefulness of the information provided in the following pages.

Teaching: Developing Competence and Character

> Good schools know what to teach and how to teach--and by keeping sharply focused on their instructional mission, they can truly teach well (Bennett, 1986, p. 19).

While schools perform many functions, teaching, particularly academic instruction, is their central mission. The public expects educators to prepare academically competent students. They also expect schools to exert a strong and positive influence on the character of youth. Good schools

take both needs--competence and character--seriously. To achieve these ends, schools must have clear goals, a broad but rigorous curriculum, staff members capable of providing high quality instruction, and a social and normative environment that has the desired influence on the character of their students.

The exemplary elementary schools described in this section generally have these qualities. They are effective teaching institutions as demonstrated by the test scores and academic achievements of their students. They also are successful at socialization as demonstrated by their students' behavior, task orientation, and commitment to school and community. The foundation of this success is their understanding of the needs of the children for whom they are responsible, as evidenced, for example, in this report from West End School, Lynbrook, New York:

> While our educational programs take into account the physical, social, and emotional needs of our students, primary educational needs continue to be heavily academic in nature. Emphasis is upon: acquisition of a strong foundation of basic skills; development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills; development of attitudes of social awareness and civic responsibility; and academic and cultural enrichment. Special area programs such as library, vocal music, band, orchestra, science, physical education, and art are therefore viewed as integral components of an instructional design whose core is composed of the acquisition of basic skills in reading, math, and oral and written communication.

The same focus is seen at Dr. W. J. Creel Elementary School in Melbourne, Florida:

> We believe our primary responsibility is to teach the basic competencies of reading, mathematics, and written communications. We believe we should develop and foster certain spiritual and moral values [such] as: respect and love of country, respect for the family, honesty, fair play, respect and love of kindness, empathy, unselfishness, sympathy, and forgiveness. We further believe that the mastery of certain basic competencies encourages the development of self-respect and a sound value system.

In the nomination forms from schools, the most frequently mentioned needs were basic skills (with 87 percent of the schools identifying this need), higher-order thinking skills (32 percent), self-esteem and personal development (31 percent), and good citizenship and preparation for adulthood (31 percent). Academic preparation was only frequently mentioned by 8 percent, although the concept may have been included in the references to higher-order skills. Schools typically derived these needs from analyzing test scores, identifying staff perceptions, and surveying the community.

Based on their understanding of the children's needs and the mission of the school as defined by the community, the district, and themselves, effective teachers develop goals. A typical example of goal setting is this statement on schoolwide student outcomes from Pioneer Elementary School in Union City, California:

> Students will acquire basic skills in reading, language, and math which will allow them to function successfully as individuals and as members of a group. Students will have daily opportunities to apply these skills in other curricular areas.
>
> Students will develop a positive self-concept. They will also develop respect and appreciation for various cultures. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the needs of others. Their health and emotional needs will be met.
>
> Students will demonstrate a spirit of unity and appreciation of the total school program. The staff will continue to emphasize pride in our school through respect for adults and students.

A major indicator of the importance attached to good teaching is the emphasis placed on recruiting and retaining high quality teachers. Administrators, staffs, and parents in these schools were quick to point out that recruiting and retaining good teachers were the keys to the schools' success. In some instances, considerable effort and time had gone into the removal of incompetent people and the recruitment of more effective staff members.

As a consequence, many examples of good instruction were observed in the schools, and the site visitors were generally impressed with what they saw in the classrooms. Although the site visit process did not permit systematic description or analysis of instruction, the reports are full of rich accounts of good instruction:

> Teachers used many different teaching strategies. Through the "Science on Wheels" program, a community volunteer with a mobile laboratory conducted a lesson about air and performed experiments to illustrate major points. She encouraged critical thinking by asking questions such as, "How do we explain that? Can we predict what will happen based on what we know?" A primary resource teacher played "Deal A Word," a card game which integrates language arts and math skills. Each card has a letter on it worth a particular value (e.g., w=8, s=1). Students created words and calculated their scores. In a K-3 gifted

math "rap session," students discussed problems they had completed, and the teacher encouraged critical thinking by asking "How did you know -- So what would this be-- Why-- Did anybody look at it in a different way?"

John N.C. Stockton School
Jacksonville, FL

Teaching techniques followed an eclectic pattern and ranged from the typical didactic lecture to the roundtable discussion type. However, there were three characteristics of this group of teachers that I encountered time and again as I observed instructional activities. First, there was a real emphasis given to an interdisciplinary approach, an attempt to bring in as many aspects of a given subject as possible... Next, I observed constant utilization of those questioning techniques calculated to stimulate critical thinking. "Will you be the same person when you're 25, 45, 75, as you are now? How will you be different? Do we ever jump to conclusions about people?" Lastly, I noticed an extraordinary enthusiasm on the teachers' part for their students' work and in "showing off" the exciting things that were going on. One teacher "pursued" me down the hall to show one of her student's projects.

Cider Mill School
Wilton, CT

Almost half of the schools reported the use of instructional teams although team planning appeared to be more common than team teaching. Some good examples of interdisciplinary planning and teaching also were reported.

Another indicator of the importance attached to the provision of quality instruction was the effort made to extend and protect instructional time:

Our staff values instructional time. We run a daily 7-hour instructional day (longer than our high school) with the only noninstructional time being 30 minutes for lunch/recess and 11 minutes for a midmorning break. This schedule (with 7 periods of 46 minutes) was developed 3 years ago by a staff committee trying to maximize academic learning time. Whenever we have school assemblies, we use an "X" schedule--classes meet, each losing about 5 minutes. In this way, students don't miss a class

in exchange for an assembly. We no longer take lunch counts, because we asked the food service to estimate. We send requests to see students (office, counselor) directly to teachers, usually [we ask them] to send students between classes, at break, lunch, or after school. Daily bulletin announcements are limited to the beginning of second period. We do not dismiss students early to travel to athletic games. Additionally, teachers receive feedback from the principal regarding at-task and academic learning time data in the classrooms.

Bolton Middle School
West Linn, OR

The serious commitment to good instruction in these schools also created positive relationships between adults and children. In one school, students said:

Everybody gets along--teachers and kids.

They teach us things we don't already know.

If we get something wrong, we go over it until it is right.

Teachers want us to succeed. Even the kids in class help us succeed--we all work together.

Longstreet Elementary School
Saginaw, MI

In another school, the principal described the warmth there:

It's the relationships that people here at Bolton have with each other. The way this staff works with one another and with kids is beautiful to see. Everyone is like a member of a big family, and they really care. The student who was in this office today because of a serious infraction of school policy and rules wrote this statement on the blackboard while I was out of the room for a few minutes: "It's my fault. I'll take my punishment and not do it again." One of the things he said to me was, "I know you care about me and the people here care about me. I just don't know what to do." It's this sort of family feeling

that is prevalent at the school. My reactions, the same as if he were my son, are, "I'm disappointed in you. You made a bad decision again. You need to learn to analyze these things before you do them rather than after the fact; however, I'm still here to support you and I'll do that." These are the sorts of messages that go back and forth between teachers and students all the time. When I think about it, what's made this school is the people philosophy and it's a very conscious one. We've brought new staff on board. They've been skilled in their subjects and how to teach them, but most of all they care about kids. That feeling is conveyed to the students and when you have that going for you anything is possible.

Bolton Middle School
Bolton, OR

These positive and supportive relationships contributed to the achievement of the other part of the school's mission: the development of character. In an urban school, for example:

It is emphasized that school is a place of business and in a place of business all members come to work with serious intent; therefore, appropriate or inappropriate behavior affects the outcome of success for the entire building. Classroom goals are established cooperatively between individual teachers and their assigned students at the beginning of each school year. These goals are visible in the classroom as a reminder of appropriate behavior and expectations. Student government members serve as hall monitors and lunchroom aides and participate actively in citywide student government meetings. In order to participate in club activities a student must maintain a "B" rating or better in citizenship and a satisfactory or better academic rating. During business meetings between the student body and principal, students are encouraged to discuss any infractions and how they affect all segments of the school population. Friday is set aside for cultural experiences, as well as the time for children, teachers, and the principal to develop, interpret, and evaluate building programs, procedures, and policies. It is time for self-direction and discipline towards the achievement of goals.

Bunker Hill School
Washington, DC

Democratic values also received considerable emphasis, as in Pike Lake Elementary School, New Brighton, Minnesota:

> Pike Lake's staff demonstrates for students the behaviors which we expect from them. Our staff's decisionmaking body, the Faculty Advisory Council, is a representative group which models the democratic process for the Student Council. We are professionals with high personal standards, and students see teachers treat others with respect and fairness. "Choice" and "responsibility" are two words which Pike Lake students hear often. We have high standards for students' academic performance and for their behavior, with emphasis on the student's own accountability. Although parents and teachers are very much involved in each individual student's education, the student must ultimately be responsible for his or her behavioral choices and work completion. Positive reinforcement is given for appropriate behavior and for responsible performance in class.

These kinds of values are reinforced by the considerable attention these schools give to our national history and culture. Finegan Elementary School in Atlantic Beach, Florida, described its efforts as follows:

> The instructional program is designed to facilitate knowledge of our Nation's culture through a myraid of creative ways: (1) during Brotherhood Week a Who's Who in America contest is held school wide and our assembly features not only native songs, dances, and costumes of other countries, but also famous American personalities; (2) at Thanksgiving our children dress as Indians and Pilgrims and are made aware of the need for sharing by providing food for needy families...; (3) Finegan has an annual Halloween Parade that centers on past and present folklore in which students, teachers and parents participate; (4) at Christmas each classroom designs and builds a gingerbread house for our school gingerbread village; (5) last year our sixth grade held a mock presidential election complete with voter registration, campaign speeches and slogans, candidates' debates, and balloting; (6) to culminate a fourth grade unit on Florida history, there was a full week's program devoted to Florida folklore with storytellers and dancers; (7) fifth graders last year were responsible for a project in which they produced original individual State brochures, posters, and flags and had a luncheon for sampling typical food for their chosen State; (8) all the children in our school completed an art project around the theme

"the Statue of Liberty" featuring contributions of immigrants from other countries; (9) recognition of minority groups and leaders is done through special assembly programs and through our intercom "Spotlight on Famous Americans."

The teaching staffs have accepted responsibility for both the academic and the social development of their students. They seek both competence and character. They work hard at understanding and responding to the needs of their students. While the specific programs and practices employed vary across schools, according to the context and the resources available, the high levels of staff commitment and caring are universal. Their schools are characterized by active teaching and by warm, supportive environments that are conducive to learning. They are good places for children because the teaching staffs understand their mission.

Setting High Expectations, Monitoring Standards, and Rewarding Results

> Elementary schools are not established simply to provide protective custody for children. They are institutions of learning and they should adhere to fair but rigorous standards. From the first day of school, children and parents alike should know what achievements will be expected of them at each level. They should also know that advancement will not take place until those goals have been reached, those standards met (Bennett, 1986, p. 53).

Studies of effective teaching have found that teachers who set and communicate high expectations and standards about academic performance and behavior for their students are likely to obtain higher levels of student performance and better student behavior than teachers who hold low expectations (Good, 1982). Research on effective schools has similarly found that schools in which staffs hold and articulate high expectations for academic performance and student behavior are likely to be more effective (Purkey & Smith, 1983). However, it is not adequate to simply set high standards. These standards must be monitored and positive behavior reinforced by appropriate rewards.

Staff expectations about student achievement are strongly influenced by the past performance of their students or that of other students. Unfortunately, according to much of the current literature, teaching staffs, like everyone else, are influenced by common racial, ethnic, or sexual stereotypes and, consequently, may lower their expectations about academic performance for particular groups of students. The academic and behavioral standards that are set and enforced and the work demands made upon students indicate the level of expectations held in a school. Yet, teachers face difficulties in setting common expectations for all students. Dilemmas arise when teachers must diagnose individual needs and respond to individual differences while simultaneously holding uniformly high expectations for all students. The tension between these demands is not always easily resolved. Good teachers struggle with this problem by maintaining high standards for

their classes over the long run, while, in the short run, varying their expectations for individual students in order to motivate them to produce their best work and move closer to the school standards.

The tension between the realities of students' skills and attitudes and adherence to high academic standards and expectations affects schools as well as individual teachers. In some schools, the dilemma is addressed by appealing to pride, rewarding extra effort, conducting special programs that enrich instruction or extend the school day, and setting clear expectations and standards. In such schools, staffs help students adjust to high academic demands.

The struggle to raise expectations is described in this narrative from Dr. W. J. Creel Elementary School in Melbourne, Florida:

> The building leaders maintain a positive influence based on a firm conviction that the educational goals are attainable and both the teachers and the students are capable of achieving them. A tenet of both leadership and personal development is getting people to believe in themselves. Many of our students had been low achievers from disadvantaged environments with low self-esteem who did not believe they could really progress nor did they care.
>
> We have labored years to eradicate this negative attitude. The building leaders established and continuously reinforce a high level of expectation and instill in the staff and students a belief that this level is not beyond their grasp.

And, similarly, at Bolton Middle School in West Linn, Oregon:

> Our staff set high expectations, not just for academic achievement and behavior, but also for the ability of our students. In regard to this, we tell our students we believe they are all capable of getting good grades. We use a mastery learning approach and generally allow students to take major exams over once. We monitor student work closely and frequently, providing lots of feedback on assignments.

An enthusiastic, can-do attitude was echoed by students at Jennings Randolph Elementary School in Elkins, West Virginia, when they were asked what was expected of them:

> "Our Very Best," was the resounding reply most often heard from students. All students stressed the fact that everyone (principal, teachers, students, janitors, and parent volunteers) did their best job. The students really seemed to take the challenge of everyone doing their best very seriously. The students commented that "Our teachers give us work, and if it's a lot, then we don't complain. We know that we have to get it done. At times they give us more than at other times. Our parents know we have homework almost every night. When we don't, they

> wonder why." While the best is expected, the students stated that their teachers don't give them more to do than they are able to do. The students stated that because each student must do their best, requirements are different for different students.

High expectations are also accompanied by a systematic effort to monitor progress. Ronald Edmonds and his colleagues (1979) found "consistent and reliable" monitoring of pupil progress to be one of the major factors that differentiated effective from ineffective schools. According to Edmonds and the scholars who have continued his work, school staffs must regularly assess pupil progress toward their instructional objectives. It is the use, not just the collection, of assessment data that is critical to school success. Successful schools not only administer tests, but their staffs also analyze the results and use them to improve their practice.

Teachers and school officials commonly use two types of assessment: assessments by the teacher and standardized tests. Teacher assessments such as classroom tests, essays, homework, and records of classroom performance help teachers find out what is being learned. Teachers use these results to identify and correct learning problems in the classroom and the results of these ongoing assessments are usually summarized on student report cards. In contrast, standardized tests are administered by the school or the district periodically to monitor achievement over time and to provide a basis for comparison to external standards of performance. The results can reveal areas of student deficiency and areas of weakness in the curriculum or in instruction. Such tests also are increasingly being used to make decisions about promotion and grouping in schools.

The recognized schools have made full use of these means to monitor the progress of their students. The practices at John F. Kennedy School in South Bend, Indiana, are typical:

> Student progress is continuously monitored through a multiple-factor system by: (1) reviewing results of all test scores including the CTBS, (2) principal-teacher conferences, (3) Houghton Mifflin Reading Management (Computer) System, (4) parent-teacher conferences, (5) team meetings, (6) team leader meetings, (7) classroom observations, (8) teacher records, and (9) individual Student Reading Progress Scores maintained in the principal's office. Student progress is also reported in the form of NCE growth scores, for the total school and for each student.

Somewhat less typical is the highly structured monitoring system described in the Seven Oak Middle School in rural Lebanon, Oregon:

> . . . annual student performance on the CTBS test is our primary method for measuring progress. In addition, student progress is assessed daily and through tests and measures appropriate to the knowledge and skill objectives addressed. At

> the end of each 3 weeks of instruction, teachers issue computerized progress reports for each student in each class. The reports are mailed to parents. Information contained in these reports consists of a student's current grading status as well as a projection of how the student[s] will finish the instructional quarter if they continue the same pattern.
>
> Teachers participate in weekly meetings to discuss student progress and make immediate adjustments in student placements. Staff specialists routinely participate in these meetings. Students experiencing difficulties in completing assigned work are referred for inclusion in our Academic Accountability Program. The Academic Accountability Program is designed to help students complete assignments by providing counseling, monitoring assignments on a daily basis, including parents in the daily monitoring process, and enforcing clearly stated consequences.

All of the schools had systems for monitoring student progress. While these systems varied in sophistication and complexity, they had a common purpose--providing feedback to keep the school on task.

A major factor in promoting high expectations is recognizing student success and achievement. Successful schools use a variety of motivating techniques. Recognition may be as simple as having work posted or being mentioned in daily announcements, or it may involve elaborate public ceremonies. Rewards vary from candy, to elective activities, to membership in special clubs. Large or small, the actions serve as reminders of the importance of academic achievement and reinforce the goals and expectations of the school:

> The first recognition program mentioned by the students was awards for scholarship and citizenship. The teachers select a candidate for each of these awards every month. About 60 students are so recognized per month. Besides being recognized at a school assembly they have their pictures displayed in the trophy case. In addition, two students are named "Super Scholars" and two "Super Citizens." The Super Scholars have lunch with a local Rotary Club and there they receive recognition by community leaders. The Super Citizens have pizza with the school counselor. Both the Super Scholars and the Super Citizens have their names printed on an individual computer poster which is hung in the school hall.
>
> Jennings Randolph Elementary School
> Elkins, WV

> Students are recognized for their academic success, work habits, behavior, and citizenship. A special salad bar lunch is prepared each month for a particular classroom or grade level that has excelled in some regard. Frequently, daily announcements feature an individual student or group of students for outstanding performance in some area. It is not unusual to see the principal leading a classroom in applause for a student or students who have just passed a reading test.
>
> In addition to in-school recognition, the principal frequently calls the students' parents to report outstanding accomplishments. Students are encouraged to develop personal, classroom, and school goals. Finally, the Honors Convocation, held annually, recognizes students from K-6.
>
> Longfellow School
> Muncie, IN

The formula seems to be: set high standards, monitor progress, recognize effort and success, use the recognition process to build pride and commitment to the school, and appeal to pride to increase the work effort and the levels of achievement for individuals and the school as a whole. Staff members from Eakin Elementary School in Nashville, Tennessee, described this cyclical process in their school:

> School pride and high morale are the products of high achievement and recognition. The principal goal of all educational institutions is academic achievement; therefore: WE ARE PROUD when Eakin students are recognized as having attained the highest overall test scores in the local school district and as being one of a group of 20 schools in the State with the highest academic performance.

The creation of a rising spiral of academic expectations often depends more upon insights into human motivation and common sense than upon particular policies or programs. Yet, the task of building pride and belief in the possibility of success among teachers and students can be difficult and slow. Leadership is a critical factor. Central to the success of these schools are administrators and teachers who act upon their convictions and, through their energy and effort, motivate their colleagues to higher levels of performance. An example of this approach comes from West End School in Lynbrook, New York:

> By displaying the desire and ability to perform to her own high standards, the principal sets the standard of excellence for all with whom she comes in contact in the building. She is supportive of teacher endeavors in classrooms. She offers encouragement and praise for unusual effort or for noteworthy or creative accomplishments. The principal models the behavior that she expects in others. She consistently places the needs of the children above all other considerations. When she believes in an educational concept she forges ahead in spite of obstacles. She brings teachers and students to awareness of their own strengths, and builds upon these strengths to initiate new programs or activities.

Administrators and teachers set the expectations for both staff and students. These expectations and high standards are closely and regularly watched to ensure they are carried out to the fullest. Special effort is also directed toward praising success, which then acts as a further stimulus to greater effort and higher achievement. This combination of factors helps generate the drive and energy that make these schools exceptional places for children.

School Leadership

> If a school is to function as a "working community," if all the parts are to mesh in an engine of achievement, the principal must act as catalyst. More than any other figure, the principal is able to create conditions for excellence--or what Study Group member Michael Joyce calls "an ethos of shared expectations." Says Professor James Guthrie of the University of California-Berkeley: "[If] you could only change one component of a school in order to make it more effective, finding a dynamic principal is the most important thing you can do " (Bennett, 1986, p. 43).

No single issue has received more attention in discussions of school effectiveness than leadership. The important message is that strong and consistent leadership is critical to long-term success. Evidence from the 212 successful elementary schools reinforces the notion that effective leadership is central to organizational success. In examining leadership in the schools, attention has been largely directed on the behaviors and skills of principals. While in most cases it is the principal who carries out critical leadership functions, this role can be performed by other professionals in the school. In many cases, dispersed leadership can be attributed to the delegation skills of the principal. Even the strongest leaders, however, may not succeed if they lack essential resources, competent teaching staffs or support from the central office.

While the importance of leadership in these schools is clear, the evidence provides no simple formula for leadership behavior. The data from the schools suggest that individual leadership styles vary markedly from one school to another, and no single style prevails. It appears, instead, that leadership styles must be adapted to the local school context. That is, these leaders have learned to adjust what they do to support the specific situation in which they work.

Furthermore, neither tenure in current position nor gender of the leader is related to success in these exemplary schools. There are as many principals new to their current positions as there are veterans who have occupied the same position for a long time. At the 212 schools, there are also as many female principals as there are males. What most characterizes these leaders is their ability to set and maintain clear direction for the school and to facilitate the work of the staff members.

Setting and maintaining direction for the school has several facets. First, there must be a clear and distinct statement of the leader's vision for the school. Often these statements manifest themselves in the form of mottos, such as "Every Child Will Learn" or "Learning is Fun." These mottos can galvanize the entire school around a theme. However, it is not enough to have a popular or catchy slogan. Second, the vision also needs to be supported by policies and programs that reinforce the message. For example, Jackson Park Elementary School in University City, Missouri, had a history of discipline problems, lack of opportunity for staff development, and low morale among staff members. A strong and energetic principal was hired who:

> ...was willing to immediately address the discipline problems to give the school a new start. The encouragement of and participation in a variety of new inservice programs gave staff skills and information which renewed their vast talents and their enthusiasm. Budget reductions were managed by developing a detailed inventory of materials already present in the building and making use of items that were already available and appropriate for the instructional program objectives. New programs were introduced by the staff--collaboration between and among staff was encouraged through inservice activities, departmentalization and team-teaching opportunities, and release time for class observation. Teacher talents were recognized and opportunities were created for their expression. Interruptions during the day were reduced...

A third facet of the leader's role in setting direction for the school involves modeling. Behavioral norms in an organization are frequently set by those who manage it. For example, the principal at R.C. Longan Elementary School in Richmond, Virginia, is vitally concerned about academic performance. The principal models that concern by carefully reading and commenting on every student's report card. The principal at Sugartown Elementary School in Malvern, Pennsylvania, demonstrates the human relations skills he wants his faculty to use with students. Grahamwood Elementary School's principal in Memphis, Tennessee, takes

special care in selecting staff members to ensure that "only new teachers who share the school's goals and standards will be selected." These behaviors help establish where teaching staffs should focus their attention. Achieving commitment to a collective focus requires leadership by someone who has good communication skills, knows how to motivate staff members, knows how to identify opportunities for improvement, and is able to persuade staff members to take advantage of those opportunities.

In addition to setting direction, a second major characteristic of these principals is that they have developed a set of tools to facilitate the work of teachers. This complements and extends the notion of an "instructional leader" portrayed in the effective schools literature. Rather than using the authority of a strong personal knowledge base to lead teachers toward desired behaviors, these principals are characterized by their supportiveness. Their trademark seems to be their ability to appeal to the professional integrity of teachers and find ways of encouraging teachers to give maximum effort to instruction. This is accomplished in many ways. Some examples include:

> Lobbying with the central office to encourage support for staff development that enhances teachers' skills and knowledge.
>
> Lake Youngs Elementary School
> Kent, WA
>
> Finding ways to increase instructional time by discouraging disruptions.
>
> Summer Street School
> Lynnfield, MA
>
> Using praise and rewards (e.g. notes of thanks, computer banners, or flowers) as appreciation for outstanding work.
>
> Page Elementary School
> Page, AZ
>
> Ensuring that teachers share in decisionmaking.
>
> Crittenden County Elementary School
> Marion, KY
>
> Lobbying for external funds from local businesses to promote innovative instructional activities.
>
> Josiah Quincy School
> Boston, MA

Encouraging teacher collaboration by planning joint periods for planning, sharing inservice experiences, or observing each other's work.

Northfield Elementary School
Ellicott City, MD

Recruiting volunteers and finding funds for aides to reduce the noninstructional duties of teachers.

Longfellow Elementary School
Muncie, IN

Providing positive reinforcement for risk-takers who are willing to try new ideas in an attempt to broaden instructional skills.

Emily Dickinson School
Redmond, WA

At these schools, the staff's strong sense of purpose and a commitment to educating students complements the principal's leadership. As the principal at Emily Dickinson School in Redmond, Washington, commented: "When all those involved become a part of the process, programs succeed." This unity of purpose is a result of leadership that provides a clearly defined direction and mechanisms that facilitate the work of teachers. While these conditions are not always established or maintained by administrators, typically it is the principal who performs these critical functions. Good principals clearly have made a difference in these exemplary elementary schools.

Creating Professional Work Environments

Most teachers enjoy little control over the terms of their work, and have few opportunities to take initiatives to improve their own effectiveness. As Study Group member Dan Cheever points out: Teaching has many of the same characteristics as other professions, including mastery of a body of knowledge. Yet it is denied important rights and responsibilities, such as setting its own standards for judging performance. We tell teachers what they should do, rather than listening to them define what needs to be done (Bennett, 1986, p. 47).

Recent calls to restructure schools have focused on increasing teachers' decisionmaking responsibilities and raising their professional status. Reports on the state of public education have called for actions to make teaching a more attractive profession. Recent surveys have documented the inadequate conditions under which many teachers work and the limited influence they exert over school policies.

In the effort to improve the teaching profession, techniques from business and industry have been examined. It has been found that increased employee participation and work redesign have been used in both the public and private sectors to build employee commitment, reduce absenteeism and deviant behavior, raise productivity, and protect the rights of workers. There are 3 decades of experience with such approaches in Western Europe and a more limited but significant track record in the private sector in the United States where such efforts are often referred to as quality of work-life programs. There also is a large but inconclusive research body of literature about the effects of these workplace reforms on productivity.

Scholars who have studied the effects of these efforts to alter working conditions have identified the following dimensions of work as important to the quality of the workplace:

- participation in decisions affecting one's work;
- reasonable control or autonomy to carry out work;
- a sense of shared purpose and community;
- recognition for contributions to the organization;
- adequate intrinsic and extrinsic rewards from the work;
- an adequate physical site that is safe and pleasant; and
- treatment with respect and dignity by others in the workplace (Stein, 1980).

These workplace concerns are shared by teachers. Current reform proposals seek to incorporate these concerns in the public schools and create a better teaching environment.

Few of the recognized schools have all of these ideal working conditions, but many of them come close. Overall, the mechanisms for participation and creation of a sense of community are stronger than the procedures for providing recognition or rewards. But even in these latter areas, the recognized schools appear to be exceptional. Good teaching is encouraged, and appreciation is shown in a variety of ways.

The effectiveness of providing good working conditions for teaching is seen in the unusually high staff attendance rates: 28 percent of the schools had attendance rates above 97.5 percent, and 82 percent had rates above 95 percent. Also, low turnover rates characterize this sample of schools:68 percent of the schools had less than 10 percent staff turnover during the most recent 3-year period.

A few examples illustrate how some of the dimensions described above have been addressed. Almost all of the schools provided multiple mechanisms for teacher participation in decisionmaking, although the nature and degree of participation varied. Summer Street School in Lynnfield, Massachusetts, offered a highly structured form:

> A 10-member Teacher Advisory Council consists of 5 teacher representatives, 4 members at large, and the principal. Agenda items are submitted prior to each monthly meeting, and meetings are held more often if needed. The Council recommends policy and acts on procedural issues within the school, for example, parent/teacher conference planning, revisions to the elementary school handbook, better use of playground facilities.

The Harbor View Elementary School in Corona del Mar, California, offered a broader form of participation:

> The leadership of the school is shared among an administrative assistant, grade-level chairpersons, and teacher coordinators. At least one-half to three-quarters of the teaching staff at any one time is involved in the leadership of the school. Harbor View School allows the sharing of the leadership in the decision-making process. Staff members are told that their opinions are of value and encouraged at all times to share their thoughts. There is an open-door policy at all times in terms of access to any of the school leaders. The leaders emphasize the importance of teamwork in getting the best decision. Group involvement is a priority in most decisionmaking.

Grade-level meetings, school council or faculty advisory meetings, school committees, and instructional teams are typical. Nearly half of the schools reported that they use instructional teams or team teaching. These mechanisms for participation are respected by school and district administrators. Time and resources are generally necessary to make them work; and when these are provided, teachers are likely to take the opportunities seriously.

Mechanisms for participation give teachers a greater sense of efficacy and control over their own work. However, the degree of autonomy teachers experience also depends on the kinds of decisions that they can make, individually and collectively. The following quote from a site visit report at West End School in Lynbrook, New York, illustrates this point:

> They [teachers] felt that any problem can be solved on the building level. There have been no grievances filed in the building for years. The teachers also indicated that they have the freedom in class to teach comfortably, "the way we want." Based on conversations with the teachers, many of the new programs, the excellent computer program which reaches into almost every grade level, the more active school chorus, etc. had teacher input and participation in the planning and development. An interesting comment was

that the "teachers back each other," meaning that they will support each other in the development of a new program. It seems that this faculty works quietly and steadily together in the preplanning stages of many new policies and programs.

Teachers at Harbor View Elementary School also reported that they had considerable professional authority:

> They pointed out that at the beginning of the year they are able to plan the schedule and work out assignments. They have planning time. They also have input into the school improvement committee. They have grade-level meetings and staff planning. They are able to determine how the school will use district funds. This is sometimes done with questionnaires, programs, or staff support.
>
> They have their choice of committees on which to serve. Many of them serve on textbook selection committees at the district level. They have active goals. There are district-based goals, and then the school sets its goals for each site. They have developed the continuum concept. They are pilots for a variety of tests for the district level. They rewrite material to fit their curriculum or their ideas.
>
> They are able to submit a wish list to determine how Parent/Faculty Organization (PFO) money should be spent. Each teacher is given $75 in State supply money for instructional materials. They have an open supply room where they can get the things they need, or if they can, get them on their own or from the PFO.
>
> Specific guidelines are followed in assigning students to classes. The students are put where teachers feel they are best able to work based on an assessment of the student's capability and the teaching style of the teacher.
>
> They feel they can determine their own teaching style and some of the reading level content. They screen the incoming kindergartners, to make sure of their social and behavioral age.

Many staffs described a sense of family or community that characterized their schools. One teacher told a site visitor:

> "...wild horses couldn't drag me away." She had taken a 6-month maternity leave because the system assured her of the same position under these terms. Another said that she had been a parent first and that she had been impressed upon touring the building with the "principal's

interaction with the students." All teachers talked of the family atmosphere, the camaraderie and sharing among teachers. One stated that the strength was the team teaching. "There are no stoler bulletin board ideas; everyone shares ideas toward making the school better for the children." As one teacher said, "No matter what, we'd make it."

John Ridgeway Elementary School
Columbia, MO

In most of the schools, rather conventional means were employed to show recognition and appreciation of good teachers. Appreciation luncheons, teacher-of-the-year awards, and citations in district publications were frequently mentioned. In some sites, however, more intimate and personal forms of recognition were emphasized:

The teachers said, "We recognize each other... the students are comfortable and receptive to our efforts...Mr . Morana (the principal) ... sends notes or personal letters or gives you a kiss." The principal types a daily "letter to the teachers" which is placed on the teacher bulletin board. The letter always contains compliments. The teachers also noted, "Mrs. Morana...always brags about us in public...at graduation...she gives us 'goodies.'" The teachers were happy to relate how the parents also regularly send in notes, call on the phone and send in little gifts. "The kids keep coming back to see us."

Houghton Academy (PS #69)
Buffalo, NY

Only a few schools offered extrinsic awards for good teaching. Generally, the rewards mentioned were intrinsic--satisfaction gained from the students, appreciation by parents, respect and collegiality from peers, and the recognition from many quarters of a job well done. Some of the tangible rewards cited were trivial--a half-day off or a longer lunch hour. Cash awards were seldom mentioned, and, when used, typically went only to a handful of teachers.

Overall these schools provided superior working conditions to those commonly found in the public schools. As a consequence, their staffs have higher morale, better attendance, lower turnover, and stronger commitment to their schools.

Resources that Facilitate the Teaching/Learning Process

Adequate resources are essential to educational success. And they must be used wisely. These points clearly emerge from an examination of the recognized elementary schools.

Additional financial resources can make a big difference to a school. In an inner city school in Indiana, additional State and local funds helped turn the school around. Prime Time and the Transition Room contribute to a stronger start for the children. Smaller classes provide teachers an opportunity to teach beyond the curriculum. Full-time aides to handle the testing and tutoring of children have increased instructional time in the classrooms. A resource room designed to accommodate special needs children also reduces the teacher's load.

It would be foolhardy to ignore the critical resource problems that plague some of our schools.* But resources should not be viewed in a narrow way. What is needed is a broad concept of human and material resources and attention to their use and allocation. A long history of research suggests that effective organizations are those in which members have ready access to the resources needed to meet their responsibilities. This should apply to educators, as well. The conditions in the exemplary schools substantiate the general research findings.

In addition to financial and material resources, there are at least five other important resources that staffs from the exemplary schools have used to their maximum advantage: time, facilities, outside support, staff input, and knowledge. These resources have been related to effectiveness by researchers conducting school improvement studies (Purkey & Smith, 1983).

One of the common complaints by classroom teachers is that the school day does not offer enough time to accomplish all that they are asked to do. Combine that perception with research findings that greater academic learning time is associated with higher student performance, and it is clear that classroom time is a scarce resource. Perhaps the most common feature of the recognized schools is the effort they make to guard classroom instructional time judiciously:

> Value is placed on instruction and instructional time; very few things are allowed to interrupt.
>
> C. M. Russell Elementary School
> Missoula, MT

*No fiscal data were collected from the Recognition Program schools as part of the recognition process. However, an independent study conducted by the Education Law Center (Corcoran, 1986) indicated that nearly 70 percent of the districts containing secondary schools that were recognized during the first 3 years of the Recognition Program are spending above the average amounts for their States to educate their youth. This evidence provides support for the argument that excellence does not come at bargain prices.

The school holds sacred an uninterrupted basic skills time block each morning. The time from 9 o'clock until 10:30 cannot be interrupted.

Garden Hills School
Atlanta, GA

Site visitors to these schools repeatedly commented on the businesslike nature that existed while classes were in session. As a site visitor noted at West End School in Lynbrook, New York: "The atmosphere at all times was one of seriousness and dedication and [it was clear] that the students were there to learn."

Another important way to increase instructional time is to ease the noninstructional duties of teachers:

Teachers do not have responsibility for collecting lunch money, study hall, or other duties which would keep them away from their primary task of educating children.

Laura B. Sprague School
Lincolnshire, IL

Yet another strategy reported by many schools was the development of a variety of "sponge" activities (brief assignments used to fill wasted time). These activities were shared among teachers and used to constructively engage students during those periods of the day when there are intervals in the formally scheduled activities.

The facilities at these exemplary schools are not necessarily modern or richly equipped, but they are treated with respect. The staff in these schools have created a feeling of ownership of the facility among students. The following is a site visitor comment:

The children simply do not vandalize the building. There is a sense of pride that seems to have been developed right from the beginning with the parents and children. Since the parents choose to send their children here, the children are expected to help maintain the building. Sometimes there is a problem with vandalism of the flowers and flower beds by new children. That happens only once, and then the other children make sure that those kinds of things do not happen...it is not long (before) new children learn that this kind of behavior is not expected at this particular school.

Greenville Elementary School
Santa Ana, CA

Staff members work hard to create an environment that is conducive to learning and conveys the message that school is a pleasant and safe place to be. As site visitors noted:

There is no graffiti in the building. The building and grounds are clean, neat, and tidy. Halls have attractive displays of children's work--both art and writing. All available space is being used for instructional purposes.

Everett School
Lake Forest, IL

Colorful bulletin boards comprising teacher boards, exhibits of students' work, student recognition boards, etc. help make the halls a bright and colorful place.

Jackson Park Elementary School
University City, MO

Several classrooms have had a special center built for them. One has a train caboose that is large enough for a table and chairs inside where children can work privately. Another has a playhouse with furniture inside that allows children to work inside. Two other classrooms have lofts where children can work "upstairs" or under the loft.

Everett School
Lake Forest, IL

Another important resource is represented by the work of outside volunteers to enhance the instructional program. As the staff members at Doherty Elementary School in West Bloomfield, Michigan, reported, "The school is filled with parent volunteers who constantly interact with students. No one is surprised to see a parent come into a classroom for any reason." The theme adopted by the volunteer program in this school is, "Service to Children is the Best Work in Life." To facilitate and encourage this volunteer effort, schools make every effort to carefully match the talents of their volunteers with the most pressing needs of the school, ensuring not only that school priorities are met but also that there will be rewarding experiences for volunteers. Several schools reported that they had established office space in their school facilities to accommodate volunteer programs. The number of hours that these volunteers donate varies but it is staggering in some schools. Greenville Fundamental Elementary School in Santa Ana, California, reported 9 000 hours of volunteer work last year. That translates to almost 10 hours per student per year, or an equivalent of eight extra teachers in the building.

Two other overlooked administrative resources critical to school success are found within the building walls: the knowledge and input of the teaching staff. Most school administrators allow teachers a great deal of autonomy when designing and implementing classroom activities. But many fail to consult them when decisions for the entire school are being made. What is striking about the interviews with teachers in the 212 exemplary sites is the degree to which they are consulted about school decisions and the frequency with which that advice is acted upon.

For example, the staff members at Roselawn Condon School in Cincinnati, Ohio, play a central role in determining their own inservice needs. This is accomplished by regular needs assessments and the use of a committee to review and plan activities. Teachers at Eakin School in Nashville, Tennessee, also plan inservices. Their committee conducts a needs assessment, sets priorities, plans programs, secures consultants, and evaluates program success. At Laura B. Sprague School in Lincolnshire, Illinois, teachers work closely with the principal to develop a written action plan for the school that "helps set a direction, outlines goals, and tells us how we are going to achieve them."

In addition to seeking teacher input, these exemplary schools also provide for the professional development of their staff members. To that end, the commitment goes beyond the usual tuition reimbursement for university credits or allocation of funds for district inservice activities. It offers opportunities for teachers to make presentations at national conferences, and also includes similar development opportunities for parent and community volunteers.

The examples from the successful schools highlight the positive and creative ways in which resources can be managed to achieve the maximum effect. These schools do not have unlimited resources. Many of them are plagued by inadequacies similar to those facing many of America's schools. Yet, their staffs are not deterred by these constraints. Rather, the staffs in these schools work to turn constraints into opportunities and to give the students the full benefit of the resources that are available.

School-Community Relations

> The single best way to improve elementary education is to strengthen parents' role in it, both by reinforcing their relationship with the school and by helping and encouraging them in their own critical job of teaching the young (Bennett, 1986, pp. 8-9).

A primary lesson learned from reviewing the data on the 212 unusually successful elementary schools is that excellent schools make full use of the resources in their communities. A trademark of these schools is the ability of their staffs to build collaborative links with the community. Rather than keeping the community at arm's length and buffering staff members from outside interference, these schools open their doors to the public and treat the community as an asset to be used to the maximum.

One result is a powerful bond between the school and its larger community. By inviting outsiders into the school, trust, commitment, and loyalty are established between school staffs, parents, and other citizens. This, in turn, promotes increased involvement in the school by members of the community which, in turn, greatly enhances the effectiveness of the school. As one parent commented at James L. Dennis Elementary School in Oklahoma City, "Not at every school is the potential of the communities tapped, but here it is and the overall quality is brought up by this."

Three key building blocks facilitate this linkage with the community. The first is the adoption of a broad definition of community. The community is more than just parents of students. It includes neighbors, local businesses, other service organizations, senior citizens, and anyone else willing to make a commitment to help children. Many of the schools have been adopted by local businesses. One striking example is Finegan Elementary School in Atlantic Beach, Florida. Staff members from a nearby naval base have adopted classrooms and have been given release time from work to lend their support to the program. Another school, Barrington Elementary School, in Upper Arlington, Ohio, has identified nearby residents without school-aged children and has made special efforts to involve them in the activities of the school--they were sent Valentines, newsletters to inform them of school activities, and special invitations to attend programs. In addition, many schools report "adopt-a-grandparent" programs that help senior citizens feel welcome. Cooperation with service organizations also has helped build stronger links to the community. Students have helped with food drives and fundraising activities and have contributed labor to projects that improve the community.

These linkages have multiple payoffs. Not only do community members gain better appreciation and understanding for what is happening in the school, but through these kinds of "service/learning projects" students also learn about the outside world. Consequently, collaboration with a broadly defined community not only helps legitimize the activities of the school, but also contributes to the knowledge and experience of students.

A second building block in school-community relations is the development of a strong communication system between the school and the community. Some examples offered by staffs of these exemplary schools include:

> The school and PTA jointly publish a monthly newsletter to inform parents and the community about events in the school.
>
> John Campbell Elementary School
> Selah, WA

> The principal makes a point of learning the names of all the parents and follows a practice of phoning 12 to 15 parents a week to discuss their children's progress. Twenty community members representing specific geographic areas served by the school meet monthly with the principal and teacher representatives to discuss school issues.
>
> Altara Elementary School
> Sandy, UT

A buddy system matches new parents in the community with "old-timers." The principal also holds a series of coffees in area homes each year to listen and respond to questions and concerns of parents.

Barrington Elementary School
Upper Arlington, OH

Yearly surveys are sent home to parents to seek their opinions about strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Garden Hills School
Atlanta, GA

Orientation sessions are established early in the school year to acquaint parents with school programs and expectations for the year. Teachers make home visits, bringing students home from school, so that they can better understand the students' home environment.

Weinberg Elementary School
Chandler, AZ

Weekly letters are sent to parents by staff summarizing goals and accomplishments, previewing the coming studies and goals, and informing parents of forthcoming needs.

Greenwood Elementary School
Des Moines, IA

The activities in these schools are not uncommon. What is uncommon is the seriousness, sincerity, and energy with which they are undertaken. They are regarded as critical to school success, not as mere window dressing to appease parents.

The third and final aspect of positive links to the community is the varied ways in which these exemplary schools attempt to involve their communities. They are not content with letting the community know about what is happening in the schools; they want community members to feel a part of the educational process. A strong testimony to that perspective is offered in these comments by a principal:

> Five years ago [our school] was characterized by low student achievement, major student behavior problems, little parent involvement, and an apparent lack of

> trust by the community. These significant obstacles have all been addressed by the true involvement of key community leaders, dedicated staff members, and eager students.
>
> Longfellow Elementary School
> Albuquerque, NM

Several specific examples illustrate how these schools have worked to increase the involvement of parents and improve their image in the community. In Hillcrest Elementary School in Logan, Utah, three conferences are scheduled annually for all students. The focus is on establishing long- and short-term academic, behavioral, and vocational goals. Meetings with parents and teachers include discussions of student achievement. Educational overviews are provided for parents. Curriculum objectives and requirements are reviewed, allowing parents the opportunity to actively participate in guiding their children toward successful accomplishment of required objectives and to select alternative goals and strategies for educational achievement.

In Waterbury, Vermont, staff members at Waterbury Elementary School sought more effective communication with parents of preschool children to strengthen their role as their child's first teacher. The staff members in the school were instrumental in creating a "children's room." This facility not only serves as a stimulating learning environment for preschool children, but is also a learning place for parents who can attend workshops on such topics as reading aloud and developmental readiness.

In addition to volunteering to help with a myriad of school activities, community members in these schools also are involved in school decisionmaking. Many of the schools involve parents and community members in setting annual goals and objectives and in planning activities to accomplish the goals. The power of such collaboration is that members of the community begin to develop a sense of ownership in the school. Ownership means commitment and support, and these community contributions help continue the cycle of success.

Overcoming Obstacles

> Excellence begins with individual schools and people--with parents who demand and then play a significant role in their children's education; with principals who have a clear vision and who know how to lead their schools; with teachers dedicated to advancing knowledge and free to do their professional work (Bennett, 1986, p. 65).

Excellence does not come without effort. The path to school success is strewn with obstacles. The obstacles to attaining high levels of educational achievement are less severe and less intimidating in the suburbs than in the cities. High test scores are most likely to be found in the affluent suburbs where the conditions for student achievement are more likely to be present; however, few would contend that all, or even most, suburban schools are excellent.

In the urban areas, the tasks are often more difficult--parents are more likely to be preoccupied with economic survival and may lack the skills or the influence needed to help their children achieve success at school. Principals often are hamstrung by large bureaucracies and may be overwhelmed by the daily problems of maintaining order. Teachers may lack instructional resources and, faced with large classes of unprepared children, lower their expectations and their demands for academic work. Many children come to school lacking the academic preparation often provided in middle class homes. They may not be well fed. They may not speak English in their homes. They may have to care for siblings or work to help support their families. Their experience may have convinced them that work in school will not pay off for them. Yet even under these dire circumstances, there are schools that succeed in achieving high levels of performance.

How do these schools achieve levels of performance above and beyond those attained in other schools serving similar populations? Regardless of the setting, there are some common factors. In addition to the basics of school success--a commitment to good teaching, high expectations with monitoring and rewarding results, leadership, professional work environments, high levels of community involvement, and adequate resources--the underlying factors are old-fashioned human commitment and stubbornness with an unwillingness to accept defeat or settle for mediocrity. These schools are different because their staffs and their communities have not settled for just "good enough," have not lowered their sights, but have turned their problems into challenges they must meet. They have designed solutions and implemented them while others have only talked about action. They have a "can-do" attitude about their work.

What kinds of problems have they faced? Applicants were asked to list the obstacles to success that they had encountered and site visitors also asked questions about past and present school problems. Developed from these sources, table 3 displays the dozen most frequently mentioned problems.

TABLE 3: PROBLEM AREAS IDENTIFIED BY THE RECOGNIZED SCHOOLS

	Problem	Percent of Schools Mentioning the Problem
1.	Inadequacy of facilities	28%
2.	Lack of financial support	24%
3.	Declining enrollment	20%
4.	Increasing enrollment	18%
5.	Changing demographics	17%
6.	Lack of specialized staff	16%
7.	Poor parent-school relations	16%
8.	Low achievement in basic skills	13%
9.	Student mobility	11%
10.	Inadequate supplies	10%
11.	Maintenance of quality	10%
12.	Student discipline	9%

Many of these problems are resource related, such as poor facilities, inadequate staff or supplies, and cutbacks in State support. Others have more to do with attitudes, commitment, and the use of resources. One-sixth of the schools reported that they have had to cope with changing school populations. One-sixth have had to overcome negative attitudes in their communities. One-eighth have worked to overcome low basic skills achievement. These are widespread problems in American public education, yet these schools have dealt with them successfully. Their examples are proof that problems can be overcome if the will and the resources are there.

How have they addressed these problems? There is no single answer nor are the answers simple. Improved management, changes in school policies, intensive inservice programs, new curricula, community outreach activities, and the creative development of new resources have all played a part in the search for solutions. The following excerpts, however, suggest the commitment, creativity, persistence, and professionalism associated with success. In Longfellow Elementary School in Muncie, Indiana, the situation is described as follows:

> Longfellow is an inner city school located in one of the lowest socioeconomic sections of the city. The children's home lives greatly affect the attitudes with which they come to school. Many are from one-parent families. There are a large number of unwed mothers as well as teenage mothers trying to hold families together. Many grandmothers are raising a second generation of children. Matriarchal families are prevalent. There are varying degrees of illiteracy in family backgrounds--many high school dropouts. The rate of unemployment is high and the children are affected by the emotional climate usually associated with unemployment. Finally, for children just coming into school there is an element of fear and mistrust between races. Teachers at the kindergarten level must work diligently to build trust and dispel such fears.

The impressive record of increasing test scores and the school's calm, positive climate were attributed to:

> Positive attitude as well as strong leadership, support, and motivation from the principal stand out as contributing most significantly to the overall success of the school. The principal's vision of a curriculum designed to fully develop the potential of inner city students has set the tone for the school. His attitude and expectation that they can achieve academic excellence is a motivating force in the building. Over the last 3 to 5 years he has attempted to handpick new faculty members whom he believed had similar convictions. The teachers, working as a team, are the second source of school success. Changes in faculty have brought about improved morale, attitudes, and cooperation among teachers.

The problems in a similar school, Longstreet Elementary School in Saginaw, Michigan, were listed as follows:

- Our 4th grade Michigan Educational Assessment Program scores were the lowest in the district in 1981.
- Our parent population includes many very young, single mothers.
- Drug and alcohol use among our mothers, both now and during the prenatal period, is common. Our parents have a drastically high unemployment rate.
- Our school is located within the lowest economic census district in the city.
- Few of our parents own automobiles.
- Many families do not have a telephone.
- Sparse, crowded living conditions prevail.
- Children come to school with a limited background of experience.
- We have a 37 percent student turnover rate.

Solutions were found in a highly structured curriculum, a strong professional development program, high staff involvement in curriculum development, and setting and enforcing high academic and behavioral standards. Commitment and compassion were also important, as described by the site visitor:

> This is truly a "love scene." Teachers love the children, the children love the teachers, the secretary loves everyone, and so does the principal. Ms. Ciolek sets the stage. A warm, enthusiastic [person] and completely dedicated to helping children enjoy life through success in whatever they do in school.... Within this deprived environment is a school with a principal and a teaching staff that were willing to overcome these enormous obstacles and provide a teaching-learning situation that includes love and success in learning. Longstreet School shouldn't be a candidate for anything but failure. In the past it's record was dismal. What changed this weakling into a force? It was the ability of a strong leader and teachers to translate their plans into success for the students.

Some schools have turned around in the midst of economic and social disadvantage. A teacher at Norbert Rillieux Elementary School in Waggaman, Louisiana, described the changes in her school:

> I was here before this atmosphere existed. Seven years ago, this school was a "bus stop" for teachers who wanted jobs on the East Bank. The principal did not control the school. The toilet paper in the bathrooms was literally chained to the walls. The cafeteria ceiling had to be scrubbed every night to get the food and debris off. There was never a stable group of teachers and nobody seemed to care. That principal left and the present principal was hired plus 16 new teachers. We then had a strong administrator and changes were made. The teachers decided they would stay at this school and make it work. They believe children can learn regardless of their home environment or economic base. The administrator worked with the faculty in deciding what discipline program to use. Workshops and seminars were attended and the group decided on the plan to follow. Because of this faculty involvement, everyone "bought into the system."

Other schools have met the challenge posed by the recent influx of immigrants to the United States; for example, at Pioneer Elementary School in Union City, California:

> In the past 3 years, Pioneer has welcomed 82 immigrants of whom 27 are refugees. Children at Pioneer speak over 20 different languages--up from 10 languages in 1981. According to information gathered in 1985 during the California Assessment Program, 41 percent of the third grade students have attended Pioneer for fewer than 2 years. One out of every six students is not proficient in English. The staff has met this challenge by a unified approach in reaching for three student outcome goals. Every activity is assessed with these outcomes clearly in mind. This focus has paid off. During its second year of operation, Pioneer was reviewed for compliance and the quality of the instructional program in a State review conducted by the Southern Alameda County Consortium. The program received the highest rating in all areas reviewed, including the rating of high in "The Effect of Instruction on Students in Oral Language, Written Language, and Fine Arts," as well as a rating of high for "The Environment in Which Learning Takes Place " and "The Effect of the Total Program on Students." The staff and parents have seen these program review results as a validation of their original vision and have moved forward into innovative programs in computer-assisted instruction, science, reading integrated into social science, science and art, and creative writing with models from literature.

A recently integrated school, Nob Hill School in Country Club Hills, Illinois, developed a partnership with a local university, which resulted in the "Science of Teaching" (SOFT) program, now required of all newly

hired teachers. The results in test scores and other visible improvements in the schools are attributed to strong leadership, teaching to objectives, and SOFT. The school is now a "well organized, task-oriented center for learning."

Finally, at the all Hispanic Lozano Special Emphasis School in Corpus Christi, Texas:

> The school's history of low academic achievement, poor attendance, lack of parental involvement, low expectations, and low self-concept were obstacles confronted by our school. Lozano's history of low academic achievement had been accepted as the norm by students, parents, and the community. Parents and students often misinterpreted our efforts to change the norm and deemed them as too rigid and harsh. State, local, and school attendance policies and guidelines were communicated to parents upon students' registration. The home-school aide followed up on absences daily. Student's low self-concept proved to be another roadblock to learning. This manifested itself through students' lack of confidence as they pursued their learning tasks and in their attitudes towards learning. The school counselor assisted the school administrators in conducting staff development meetings, and parent and student guidance sessions to ensure the improvement of the students' self-concept. Parental involvement at Lozano was non-existent. The principal immediately elicited parental support to establish a Parent Teacher Association. The principal also designated a parents' room to encourage informal parent gatherings, to begin to attract them to visit our school. Weekly meetings on parenting techniques were immediately organized. Soon parents began to volunteer and became very active in school activities. Besides attendance at PTA, parenting meetings, parent conferences, and other meetings, over 8,000 volunteer hours were documented last year.

These schools are testimony to what can be done. They have faced educational and social difficulties and won. The staffs are winners. The children are winners. And the communities and the Nation are winners because of the dedication and effort that has elevated these schools to their level of excellence.

Summary

Quality elementary education can be found in many different settings across America. Excellent schools are located in urban, suburban, and rural settings; serve Hispanic and black populations as well as predominantly white communities; and cater to families of widely varying economic means. The characteristics of the schools themselves are equally diverse. They range in size from a one-room school with only 40 students to some that educate over 1,200 students. The schools also represent various types of districts, with 10 percent being the sole elementary school in the district and 10 percent coming from districts having more than 50 elementary schools. The grade-level span is equally wide ranging with over 20 combinations from K-2 to K-8. The principal who lead these schools also are diverse. Half are female and the median tenure is 6 years.

The most important characteristics of these schools are the positive results they produce. Attendance for both the staffs and students is high. Long lists of awards at both the State and national levels testify to their quality of performance. Furthermore, achievement test data indicate that these schools either have maintained a consistently high level of performance over time or have shown marked improvement in recent years. These indicators offer strong evidence that these schools are exciting places where children succeed.

The specific characteristics that make these schools stand out are of particular interest to those concerned with school improvement. After a careful review of data provided by the schools and independent observers, seven themes were identified that seem to capture the dynamics of their excellence:

- Teaching: Developing Competence and Character;
- Setting High Expectations, Monitoring Standards, and Rewarding Results;
- School Leadership;
- Creating Professional Work Environments;
- Resources that Facilitate the Teaching/Learning Process;
- School-Community Relations; and
- Overcoming Obstacles.

Teachers in the exemplary schools both prepare their students to be academically competent and exert a strong and positive influence on their character. Their success is directly attributable to their understanding of the full range of needs of the children for whom they are responsible.

Other factors which contribute to good teaching in these schools include the emphasis placed on recruitment and retention of quality staffs, opportunities for interdisciplinary planning and teaching, efforts to extend and protect instructional time, and the positive character of relationships between adults and students.

The second theme involves expectations, standards, and results. Teachers in these schools recognize the inherent tension between the push for setting higher expectations and standards for the school and the need to reach and motivate individual students. Teachers adapt to this dilemma by maintaining high standards for their classes over the long run while, in the short term, varying expectations for individual students to motivate them. Through appeals to pride, extra effort, and special programs that enrich instruction or the school day, staffs help students adjust to academic demands rather than adjust their standards downward. The general formula is to set high standards, closely and regularly monitor implementation, recognize and reward effort and success, use the recognition process to build pride and commitment to the school, and appeal to pride to increase the work effort and levels of achievement for individuals and the school as a whole.

The quality of school leadership is the third theme characterizing these successful schools. While no single leadership style predominates, there are two features common to leadership in these schools. First, the leaders set and maintain direction for the school. This is accomplished by a clear and distinct statement of the leader's vision for the school, a set of policies and programs that reinforce that vision, and modeling of behavior by the leader. The second common leadership characteristic is that these leaders facilitate the work of teachers by adopting a wide range of supportive behaviors.

The fourth theme addresses important workplace concerns. Exemplary schools strive to create professional environments for teachers that ease the accomplishment of their work. Some of the more important working conditions are participation in decisions affecting one's work; reasonable control or autonomy to carry out work; a sense of shared purpose and community; recognition for contributions to the organization; adequate intrinsic and extrinsic rewards from the work; a pleasant, safe, and adequately sized physical site; and treatment with respect and dignity by others in the workplace.

The fifth theme concerns the resources used by staff members in these exemplary schools to enhance the process of teaching and learning. Five important resources have been used to their maximum advantage. The first resource is time. Staffs in these schools jealously guard classroom instructional time. Second, close attention is paid to the quality of facilities. Not all of these schools have modern, new facilities; but what they do have is put to maximum use, and the message has been conveyed to families that school is a pleasant and safe place to be. Another important resource is the extensive use of outside volunteers to expand the instructional program. Two other resources are the administrative input and knowledge of the teachers. Teachers in these schools report that they are

consulted about important decisions and their advice is acted upon. Administrators also make maximum use of teacher knowledge by having them conduct inservice programs and by allowing ample staff development opportunities.

School-community relations is the sixth common theme. Three key building blocks facilitate a linkage between the school and the community. The first is a broad definition of community that goes beyond parents to include neighbors, local businesses, service organizations, and senior citizens. A second building block is the development of a strong communication system between the school and the community. The final building block is the variety of ways in which these exemplary schools attempt to involve their communities. They get community members involved in service activities and in instruction and school decisionmaking. The power of such interactions produces a collaboration between the school and the community which yields benefits for everyone involved.

The final theme highlights the ability of staffs to overcome a variety of obstacles. Excellence does not come without a great deal of hard work. While attributes outlined in the earlier themes help explain much of the success in these schools, another important quality is their stubbornness. The staffs in these schools are unwilling to accept defeat or settle for mediocrity. They have turned their problems into challenges. They have designed solutions and implemented them while others have only talked about action. There is a real "can-do" approach to problem solving, even though their problems are not unlike those of most schools around the Nation.

There are no simple answers or formulas to be followed in overcoming obstacles. A wide range of strategies have been tried. What appears to set these schools apart is the commitment, creativity, persistence, and professionalism with which they have gone about the task.

A movement toward excellence in public schools is spreading across the country. The goal is to have all schools reflect many of the positive themes found in these exemplary elementary schools. Efforts to improve the Nation's schools are not new. Indeed, major initiatives to improve or reform schools take center stage every 15 or 20 years. What may separate this initiative from past efforts is the nearly universal agreement among all groups that our schools need major changes. The agenda this time is sweeping. It addresses a wide range of problems and there is ample evidence that State legislatures are prepared to back these efforts with new legislation.

The important message from the 212 recognized schools is that they have already put into place what legislatures, parents, and others are demanding. They have high quality staffs who take instruction seriously. They hold high expectations and can motivate staffs and students. They have strong leadership. They create work environments where staff members grow and continue to perform at high levels. They creatively use people and material resources. They involve the community so that there is a collective sense of ownership in the educational process. And they tackle problems with a force of energy that converts them from liabilities into strengths.

What is the lesson from all of these experiences? There is no magic or quick fix. Rather, it is the chemistry of combining all the small, positive things that makes the difference. Each recognized school tends to blend these themes in different ways and, as the end result, creates a unique compound where people can boast that this is a place where children succeed.

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Appendix A

1985-1986 Schools Selected for National Recognition

ALABAMA	
Cahaba Heights Community School	Birmingham
Valley Elementary School	Pelham
Vestavia Hills Elementary School-West	Vestavia Hills
ALASKA	
Tok School	Tok
ARIZONA	
Booker T. Washington School	Mesa
Laguna Elementary School	Tucson
Page Elementary School	Page
Weinberg Elementary School	Chandler
CALIFORNIA	
Alamo Elementary School	Alamo
Amy Blanc Elementary School	Fairfield
Discovery Bay Elementary School	Byron
Fort Washington Elementary School	Fresno
Garden Gate Elementary School	Cupertino
Greenville Fundamental Elementary	Santa Ana
Harbor View Elementary School	Corona Del Mar
Lupin Hill Elementary School	Calabasas
Melvin Avenue School	Reseda
Mendocino Middle School	Mendocino
O'Neill Elementary School	Mission Viejo
Pioneer Elementary School	Union City
Walter White School	Ceres
West Valley Elementary School	Sunnyvale
White Oak Elementary School	Westlake
COLORADO	
Douglass Valley School	Colorado Springs
CONNECTICUT	
Cider Mill School	Wilton

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	
Bunker Hill School	Washington
Smothers Elementary School	Washington
FLORIDA	
Bayview Elementary School	Ft. Lauderdale
Caloosa Elementary School	Cape Coral
Finegan Elementary School	Atlantic Beach
Hendricks Avenue Elementary School	Jacksonville
Jackson Heights Middle School	Oviedo
John N.C. Stockton School	Jacksonville
Kate Sullivan Elementary School	Tallahassee
Pinecrest Elementary School	Miami
Pine Trail Elementary School	Ormond Beach
Dr. W.J. Creel Elementary School	Melbourne
GEORGIA	
Burroughs-Molette Elementary School	Brunswick
Duluth Middle School	Duluth
Garden Hills School	Atlanta
Mt. Bethel Elementary School	Marietta
Southside Elementary School	Milledgeville
HAWAII	
Manoa Elementary School	Honolulu
Nuuanu Elementary School	Honolulu
IDAHO	
Lincoln Elementary School	Caldwell
Pierce School	Pierce
ILLINOIS	
Everett School	Lake Forest
Fairview South School	Skokie
Garden Hills Elementary School	Champaign
Hadley Junior High School	Glen Ellyn
John W. Gates Elementary School	Aurora
Kenneth E. Neubert Elementary School	Algonquin
La Grange Highlands Elementary School	La Grange
Laura B. Sprague School	Lincolnshire
Nob Hill School	Country Club Hills
Ravinia School	Highland Park
Sheridan School	Lake Forest
Winston Churchill School	Homewood

INDIANA	
College Wood Elementary	Carmel
John F. Kennedy School	South Bend
Longfellow Elementary School	Muncie
Skiles Test Elementary School	Indianapolis
Southport Elementary School	Southport
IOWA	
Cody Elementary School	Pleasant Valley
Greenwood Elementary School	Des Moines
KANSAS	
Tomahawk Elementary School	Olathe
Village Elementary School	Emporia
KENTUCKY	
Arnett Elementary School	Erlanger
Clark Elementary School	Paducah
Crittenden County Elementary School	Marion
Goshen Elementary School	Goshen
Helmwood Heights Elementary School	Elizabethtown
LOUISIANA	
Bissonet Plaza Elementary School	Metairie
M. R. Weaver Elementary School	Natchitoches
Norbert Rillieux Elementary School	Waggaman
Upper Little Caillou School	Chauvin
MAINE	
Park Street School	Kennebunk
MARYLAND	
College Gardens Elementary School	Rockville
Mt. Harmony Elementary School	Owings
Northfield Elementary School	Ellicott City
MASSACHUSETTS	
Claypit Hill School	Wayland
Hawlemont Regional School	Shelburne
Josiah Quincy School	Boston
Summer Street School	Lynnfield
Tucker School	Milton

MICHIGAN	
Ann J. Kellogg School	Battle Creek
Doherty Elementary School	West Bloomfield
Longstreet Elementary School	Saginaw
Orchard Hills Elementary	Novi
Parkwood-Upjohn School	Kalamazoo
Quarton Elementary School	Birmingham
Shay Elementary School	Harbor Springs
Sylvester Elementary School	Berrien Springs
MINNESOTA	
Poplar Bridge Elementary School	Bloomington
Pike Lake	New Brighton
MISSISSIPPI	
Hall's Ferry Road Elementary School	Vicksburg
Marion Park Elementary School	Meridian
Northside Elementary School	Pearl
MISSOURI	
Fairview Elementary School	Columbia
Highcroft Ridge School	Chesterfield
Jackson Park Elementary School	University City
John Ridgeway Elementary School	Columbia
Mason Ridge School	Creve Coeur
Meramec Elementary School	Clayton
Monett Elementary School	Monett
Thomas B. Chinn School	Kansas City
MONTANA	
C. M. Russell Elementary School	Missoula
NEVADA	
Gardnerville Elementary School	Gardnerville
Stead Elementary	Reno
NEW HAMPSHIRE	
Moultonborough Central School	Moultonborough
Stratham Memorial School	Stratham
Woodman Park School	Dover

NEW MEXICO	
Corrales Elementary School	Albuquerque
Longfellow Elementary School	Albuquerque
NEW YORK	
Canandaigua Primary School	Canandaigua
Carrie E. Tompkins Elementary School	Croton-on-Hudson
Central School	Larchmont
The Douglaston School, P.S. 98, Queens	Douglaston (Queens)
Futures Academy #37	Buffalo
Harbor Hill School	Greenvale
Harrison Avenue School	Harrison
Houghton Academy (P. S. #69)	Buffalo
Lake George Elementary School	Lake George
Lincoln Elementary School	Scotia
Marion Street Elementary	Lynbrook
Park Early Childhood Center	Westbury
P.S. 189/Bilingual School	Brooklyn
Ridge Street School	Rye Brook
Sacandaga Elementary	Scotia
School #54 Early Childhood Center	Buffalo
Thomas K. Beecher School	Elmira
Weedsport Elementary School	Weedsport
West End School	Lynbrook
West Hertel Academy	Buffalo
NORTH CAROLINA	
Brevard Elementary School	Brevard
Ira B. Jones Elementary School	Asheville
Park View Elementary School	Mooresville
W. G. Pearson Elementary School	Durham
NORTH DAKOTA	
Crosby Elementary School	Crosby
OHIO	
Barrington Elementary School	Upper Arlington
Bath Elementary School	Akron
Chambers Elementary School	East Cleveland
Edison Primary School	Dayton
Evamere Elementary School	Hudson
Forest Elementary School	North Olmstead
Frances Dunlavy Elementary School	Lebanon
Gibbs Elementary School	Canton
Lomond Elementary School	Shaker Heights
Olde Sawmill Elementary School	Dublin

OHIO (continued)	
Robert E. Lucas Intermediate School	Cincinnati
Roselawn Condon School	Cincinnati
Tremont Elementary School	Upper Arlington
Windermere Elementary School	Upper Arlington
W.M. Sellman Middle School	Madeira
Worthington Hills School	Worthington
OKLAHOMA	
Carnegie School	Tulsa
Crosby Park Elementary	Lawton
James L. Dennis Elementary School	Oklahoma City
OREGON	
Bolton Middle School	West Linn
Corridor School	Creswell
Nyssa Elementary School	Nyssa
Riverdale School	Portland
Seven Oak Middle School	Lebanon
PENNSYLVANIA	
Buckingham Elementary School	Buckingham
Chatham Park School	Havertown
Franklin Elementary School	Sewickley
Mary C. Howse Elementary School	West Chester
Merion Elementary School	Merion
New Eagle Elementary School	Wayne
Penn Wynne School	Philadelphia
Scenic Hills Elementary School	Springfield
Sugartown Elementary School	Malvern
RHODE ISLAND	
Narragansett Elementary School	Narragansett
SOUTH CAROLINA	
Conder Elementary School	Columbia
Cowpens Elementary School	Cowpens
Joseph Keels Elementary School	Columbia
TENNESSEE	
Dodson Elementary School	Hermitage
Eakin Elementary School	Nashville
Grahamwood School	Memphis
Ingleside School	Athens
Snow Hill Elementary School	Ooltewah
Thrasher Elementary School	Signal Mountain

TEXAS	
Crockett Elementary-Intermediate School	El Paso
Hamilton Park Pacesetter School	Dallas
John S. Armstrong Elementary School	Dallas
Juan N. Seguin Elementary School	McAllen
Lozano Special Emphasis School	Corpus Christi
Pope Elementary School	Arlington
Rose Shaw Special Emphasis School	Corpus Christi
Rummel Creek Elementary School	Houston
T. H. Johnson Elementary School	Taylor
Wake Village School	Wake Village
Woodway Elementary School	Waco
UTAH	
Altara Elementary School	Sandy
Hillcrest Elementary School	Logan
VERMONT	
Waterbury Elementary School	Waterbury
VIRGINIA	
David A. Dutrow Elementary School	Newport News
Falls Church Elementary School	Falls Church
Heritage Elementary School	Lynchburg
Oak Grove Elementary School	Roanoke
Oakridge Elementary School	Arlington
R. C. Longan Elementary School	Richmond
WASHINGTON	
Blaine Middle School	Blaine
Emily Dickinson School	Redmond
John Campbell Elementary School	Selah
Lacamas Heights Elementary School	Camas
Lake Youngs Elementary School	Kent
Whitworth Elementary School	Seattle
WEST VIRGINIA	
Jennings Randolph Elementary School	Elkins
Johnson Elementary School	Bridgeport
WISCONSIN	
McFarland Elementary School	McFarland
Spring Road School	Neenah

Appendix B

1985-1986 Elementary School Recognition Program

Review Panelists

Hideko Bannai	Gardena, CA
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Suzanne Thomas	Houston, TX
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Appendix C

1985-1986 Elementary School Recognition Program

Site Visitors

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Stephen Henderson	Frankfort, KY
Bernard Hughes	Superior, WI
James Jess	Latimer, IA
Richard Long	Washington, DC
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